

Monday, January 19, 1998

De Niro raising the hackles of Parisians with his shooting of new

PARIS (AFP) — Robert De Niro is in Paris for the first time since his Oscar-winning performance in "The Untouchables" last year. The 52-year-old actor is in the city for a short stay, but he is expected to continue until the end of the month, having been invited to the Cannes film festival by the French government. De Niro is expected to be accompanied on the visit by a number of Royal family members, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Chief of the Royal Court Awn Khawarizma and a number of advisers.

Richard Gere to star at Vienna

VIENNA (AFP) — Richard Gere will be the star of the Vienna Opera House's production of "The Phantom of the Opera" this month. The opera, which is based on the novel by Gaston Leroux, is expected to be a major success for the opera house. Gere is expected to be accompanied on the visit by a number of Royal family members, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Chief of the Royal Court Awn Khawarizma and a number of advisers.

Judge refuses to dismiss libel suit by super couple Willis and Moore

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — A judge has refused to dismiss a libel suit filed by the super couple, Kim and Richard Willis, against a magazine. The suit is expected to be a major test case for the media. The judge is expected to be accompanied on the visit by a number of Royal family members, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Chief of the Royal Court Awn Khawarizma and a number of advisers.

Bulgarian woman accuses Jackal of stealing his wife

PARIS (AFP) — A Bulgarian woman has accused a man of stealing her wife. The woman is expected to be accompanied on the visit by a number of Royal family members, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Chief of the Royal Court Awn Khawarizma and a number of advisers.

Armani does windows for his Paris neighbor

PARIS (AFP) — Giorgio Armani has done windows for his Paris neighbor. The neighbor is expected to be accompanied on the visit by a number of Royal family members, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Chief of the Royal Court Awn Khawarizma and a number of advisers.

King to perform Al Umra, meet Saudi King

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein is due to travel to Saudi Arabia over the weekend to perform Al Umra (Lesser pilgrimage) in Mecca and to meet King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and senior Saudi leaders including the Saudi Crown Prince. The King is expected to be accompanied on the visit by a number of Royal family members, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Chief of the Royal Court Awn Khawarizma and a number of advisers.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جورديان تايمز يومية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية، الراي.

Volume 23 Number 6742

AMMAN MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 1998, RAMADAN 21, 1418

Price: Jordan 200 fils

8, including Iraqi DCM, murdered in Al Rabbia

Government denounces 'heinous crime,' stresses it 'will not allow its territories to be a springboard for settling disputes'

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Six Iraqis, including the Iraqi embassy's deputy chief of mission and two Egyptians were stabbed to death in Amman late on Saturday, officials said on Sunday.

A Greek woman identified as Anastasia Diotisides, 37, was the only survivor of the grizzly murder in which between three to five masked men, speaking with an Iraqi accent, slit the throats of their victims, they added.

Iraqi deputy chief of mission and Charges d'Affaires Hikmat Abdul Razaq Al Hajo and his Egyptian wife Laila were killed at the house of Sami Thomas George, a 62-year-old wealthy Iraqi businessman, in the affluent Rabbia area.

A spokesman of the government denounced the attack and described it as a "heinous crime."

"The government received the news of the murder with shock and sorrow," said Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi.

"The government



Hikmat Al-Hajo, deputy chief of mission at the Iraqi embassy in Amman, who was stabbed to death along with seven others including his wife Saturday evening (Photo by Yousef 'Allan')

denounces such barbaric acts... and stresses that those behind the attack will be referred to court," Dr. Mutawi said.

"Jordan will not allow its territories to be a springboard for settling disputes whatever the reasons were," the minister added.

the basement of the two-story villa.

The motive of the slayings, that appears to have been carried out by professional hit men, was unclear. No suspects were arrested so far, security officials said.

An Iraqi embassy spokesman in Amman said the crime was politically motivated. Baghdad was the first to break the news of the slayings.

But the Associated Press quoted security officials as saying they believed George may have been the target of the killers and that the motive could have been linked to internal Iraqi feuding.

AP said George, a member of the Assyrian Christian minority in Iraq, is believed to have run businesses for Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and his eldest son Uday for the past decade or so.

He has lived in Jordan for the past several years.

It was the second attack involving an Iraqi diplomat in Jordan in less than two

(Continued on page 7)

Jordan awaits implementation of Oslo accords, rejects Israel's security maps — Crown Prince

By Alia A. Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has reaffirmed Jordan's "unwavering position" of non-interference in Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, while stressing Jordan's continued support for the Palestinians and their efforts to regain their rights.

Prince Hassan said that even though the Kingdom does have an interest in certain Palestinian-Israeli final status issues such as refugees and water, it plays no role in other purely bilateral matters between the two parties, such as security.

In response to questions raised by journalists after he hosted an iftar for them Saturday, the Crown Prince also reiterated Jordan's rejection of "security" maps proposed by Israeli Minister of Infrastructure Ariel Sharon.

Prince Hassan said Israel will continue to put forth its own proposals, but Jordan's position on these issues is clear as it awaits the implementation of the Oslo accords, including the second and third redeployment



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan talks candidly to members of the press Saturday on Jordan's position concerning recent developments during an iftar banquet he held in their honour (Photo by Boghos)

of Israeli troops from Palestinian areas.

In addition, Jordan will not be responsible for the consequences resulting from any Israeli unilateral move, the Crown Prince said.

Asked about a possible Jordanian initiative to

revive the faltering peace talks, Prince Hassan said

"there is an attempt to consolidate a Jordanian-Palestinian dialogue and to strengthen coordination in this phase."

But, he continued, "we do not want to talk about political initiatives at this

stage," pointing out that there is a clear American interest in putting the talks back on track.

Responding to a question on a statement made by Israeli Labour Party member of Knesset Haim

(Continued on page 7)

Arafat threatens to restart intifada; U.S. asks PNA to crack down on terrorism

Combined agency dispatches

PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT Yasser Arafat threatened to launch a new intifada (uprising) Sunday if the deadline in the peace process was not resolved.

"We are ready to return to where we left off and restart the seven years of intifada," President Arafat said at a commemorative rally here.

"We want a peace of the brave and not a peace of the weak," the Palestinian leader said just four days before meeting U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington.

"We want a Palestinian peace that will lead to a state with Jerusalem as its capital and not the peace of Benjamin Netanyahu," he said.

Mr. Clinton is due to hold separate meetings with Mr. Netanyahu on Tuesday and

Israeli cabinet delays decision on troop pullback until after Washington talks

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel, confident that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will face no pressure in his meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton, refused once more on Sunday to decide the extent of a West Bank troop withdrawal.

Mr. Netanyahu's cabinet announced it would only decide the size of the pullback at an unspecified date following Mr. Netanyahu's return to Israel two days after his Tuesday meeting with Mr. Clinton in Washington.

It said it would approve a "maximum

size [for the pullback] which does not harm Israeli national interests and which will be implemented only if the Palestinians respect their commitments."

Mr. Netanyahu defended his government's decision Sunday before his talks with Mr. Clinton.

"If we outlined a number there's no doubt the Palestinians and Americans would immediately react and it wouldn't serve the goal I have," Mr. Netanyahu told Israel

(Continued on page 7)

Iraq releases all Jordanian prisoners

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Sunday ordered the release of all Jordanian prisoners in Iraq, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) said.

"President Saddam Hussein decided that all Jordanian prisoners be freed immediately... whatever their sentences," the agency said.

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi told the Jordan Times last night that the government had

no information available on the Iraqi decision and could not therefore comment on it.

"Until this moment we have not been informed about the Iraqi decision," said Dr. Mutawi. "We cannot comment on it before we receive an official notification from the Iraqi side."

"But in principle the Kingdom welcomes any decision by any government to release Jordanian prisoners from its jails," said Dr. Mutawi.

The INA said that President Saddam made the decision after meeting former

Islamist Deputy Leith Shbeilat in Baghdad.

President Saddam also ordered a "halt to all legal proceedings against all Jordanians" held on various charges.

The problem of Jordanian prisoners in Iraq, a thorny issue in the relations between the two countries, was discussed between the two countries' interior ministers earlier this month.

Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid met with his Iraqi counterpart, Mohammad Znam Abdul Razaq in Amman earlier this month

and agreed to hold further talks after Ramadan.

Mr. Rashid told the Jordan Times at that time that Mr. Abdul Razaq had handed him a file containing the names of 63 Jordanian prisoners.

The issue of Jordanian prisoners in Iraq surfaced after Iraq executed four Jordanians in Baghdad on Dec. 8 for smuggling car spare parts.

The Iraqi move prompted a strong reaction from Jordan which recalled its charge d'affaires in Baghdad, Adil Sweidan, and expelled seven Iraqi diplomats.

(Continued on page 7)

U.S. rejects Iraq's ultimatum on UNSCOM inspections, threatens use of military force

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States dismissed Sunday an ultimatum from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on the lifting of a crippling U.N. embargo on his country, insisting that he must first comply with U.N. weapons inspections.

"First of all it is not up to Saddam Hussein to be offering this kind of ultimatum," said U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

"What has happened here as you well know is the international community put on the toughest sanctions in the history of the world after he had invaded a small country next to him, Kuwait."

"We have managed to maintain those sanctions for seven years and they will stay on until Saddam Hussein carries out his obligations, which is to come clean on the weapons of mass destruction."

Mr. Hussein threatened Saturday to give U.N. arms inspectors a six-month ultimatum to leave Baghdad.

In an interview with NBC Television, Ms. Albright said Mr. Hussein had "dug his hole deeper" but that Washington would continue

its diplomatic offensive to resolve the crisis before considering the military option.

"While the threat of military force is there, and there are those who think we should use it now, I think it is very important for us to pursue the course we are on," she said. "The international community has come together in a very strong way again to make clear that Saddam Hussein has to fulfill his obligations. But the use of military force is an option and we have made that very clear."

In the standoff over weapons inspections she said Mr. Hussein had brought the international community closer together in condemnation of Iraq.

"Every time he has tried to divide the international community he has actually brought us closer together and those of the countries that believe that they can defend Saddam Hussein are finding it harder and harder."

Iraq sparked the latest confrontation over U.N. weapons inspections by barring former U.S. marine Scott Ritter from leading arms inspections last week.

U.N. inspectors are charged with verifying whether Iraq has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction before the embargo imposed during the 1991 Gulf war can be lifted.

The chief of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) for disarmament Iraq, Richard Butler, is due in Baghdad Monday to discuss the latest episode in a standoff over inspections that dates back to the expulsion for a week of all U.N. inspectors by Iraq last year.

In an interview with CBS Television Sunday he said that "the basic job at hand here is disarmament. That's the only way out of this box."

"And the only way we'll get that job done well and quickly is if Iraq stops non-compliance and cooperates with us."

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson asserted that there was a "build-up of weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq and that "there is hardly any prospect that sanctions are going to be lifted."

He said on Fox Television that Baghdad should "let the sunshine in, let there be

full access to all sites."

He dismissed the Iraqi leader's ultimatum as "provocative and belligerent."

However Nizar Hamdoun, Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations, said Iraq had given up on "all our weapons of mass destruction" programmes.

"We are trying to end the sanctions that are killing the people," he said. "We are in the seventh year [of sanctions] with over 5,000 Iraqi kids dying every month."

He dismissed reports of chemical and biological experiments on human guinea pigs.

"That's not true, I will deny that categorically," he told NBC Television.

London's Sunday Times reported that dozens of Iranian prisoners of war were believed to have died in biological weapons testing.

The paper said evidence suggested that tests on human beings began in the 1980s during Iraq's eight-year war with Iran. Ms. Albright said she had no evidence of Iraqi experiments on humans.

EU ministers due in Algeria today

ALGIERS (AFP) — European Union (EU) ministers are to visit Algeria today in their first fact-finding mission, a move intended to see how Europe can help end six years of violence in the north African state.

British Junior Foreign Minister Derek Fatchett, Austria's Deputy Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner and their Luxembourg counterpart Georges Wofhart will arrive in Algiers Monday afternoon, accompanied by European Commission Vice President Manuel Marin.

Algeria had earlier opposed as "too modest" the EU's previous idea of sending lower-ranking officials.

"Whatever the solution will be, it is good that the European Union renews dialogue with Algeria," Mr. Marin said in an interview published Sunday in his

(Continued on page 7)

Prince Hassan calls on reporters to assume responsible professional role

'Enshrined in Constitution, freedom of speech could only be guarded by competent performance of media'

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has stressed the importance of media institutions in encouraging constructive dialogue among all sectors of the community.

During an iftar banquet he hosted for media professionals on Saturday evening, the Prince urged journalists to assume a more responsible role in the execution of their profession, since, by doing so, they enhance the importance of press freedom as a basis for the progress of democracy.

The Crown Prince called on representatives of the state and private media to aim to be more responsible and objective by conveying

the truth and criticising in a constructive manner.

Freedom of speech is enshrined in the Constitution and it could only be guarded and furthered by competent performance based on true awareness and realisation of the responsibility that comes with it, he said.

He insisted that media people should be aware of the enormity of that responsibility, and should take the initiative to protect it by devising a code of honour that is based on credibility, integrity, objectivity, precision and the highest interests of the country.

"Respect of truth and accurate reporting, without prejudice or self-interest, is a sacred principle in journalistic work," he said.

"We have come a long

way in making freedom of speech and expression a reality," he said, adding that several sides have taken advantage of that freedom and have tried to harm the country and its achievements.

"The misinterpretation of the freedom of speech and expression by some should not dissuade us from continued efforts in making it a strong basis for our democratic process," he said.

During the banquet, which was attended by Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani, Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin and Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi, the Prince noted the urgent need for proper and continued training of

(Continued on page 7)

Lebanese Hizbollah fighter killed in skirmish with Israeli troops

BEIRUT (AFP) — Hizbollah confirmed on Sunday that one of its guerrillas was killed in a skirmish with Israeli troops in south Lebanon.

Mohammad Mounif Kasmir, 26, was killed "during a heroic clash Friday with the Israeli military," the group said.

He was the first Hizbollah fighter killed in south Lebanon this year.

An Israeli military spokesman on Friday said the Hizbollah guerrilla was killed

during the clash and that three Israelis had been lightly wounded.

The spokesman said a squad of the Shiite Muslim guerrillas fought an Israeli parachute unit near Sejod in the eastern part of the Jewish state's self-declared security zone in south Lebanon.

Israel occupies the zone to avert cross-border attacks on its northern territory.

Meanwhile, officials here Sunday said the international committee monitoring the

Israeli-Hizbollah ceasefire in south Lebanon will meet Tuesday to examine complaints by both Lebanon and Israel.

Lebanon Saturday filed a complaint over Israeli shelling Friday of civilian areas in Hizbollah's Iqlim Tuffah heights stronghold south of Beirut.

Israel lodged a complaint about a Hizbollah attack Thursday on a village in the self-declared security zone, protesting that a house had

been seriously damaged.

The committee — made up of representatives from France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the United States — oversees the April 1996 ceasefire agreement under which both Israel and Hizbollah undertake to avoid civilian casualties.

So far, 11 Israeli troops have been wounded in south Lebanon since the beginning of 1998, while 39 Israeli soldiers were killed and 102 others wounded last year.

Iran slams banning of Welfare Party

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian state radio on Saturday severely criticised the dissolution of the Islam-based Welfare Party by Ankara, saying the move showed that repression of Islamists in Turkey was reaching its peak.

"The dissolution of Welfare has come about because of the repression of Islamists, which will without doubt have a strong impact on this country," said the radio, in the

first Iranian reaction to Friday's decision.

The radio said the decision by Turkey's constitutional court to dissolve Welfare, the largest party in parliament, would have profound implications for the country.

"How can you not take into consideration the vote of around 20 per cent of the Turkish population which supports Welfare?" it asked.

The 11-member court panel

voted 9-2 to dissolve Welfare, or Refah in Turkish, for activities against the country's secular regime.

The court also banned Welfare's leader, former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, from politics for five years.

Welfare garnered 21 per cent of the vote in the December 1995 legislative elections and had 150 deputies in the 550-seat house, more than any other party.

Israeli Arab delegation to visit Syria in early February

DAMASCUS (AFP) — An Israeli Arab delegation including four members of the Israeli parliament is to hold talks here with Syrian officials in early February, a Damascus-based Palestinian opposition group told AFP Sunday.

The delegation would include between 50 and 70 Israeli Arabs and was intended to "bring together Palestinians from the Palestinian territories and the diaspora," said an official of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).

The visit will be the third to Damascus by an Israeli Arab delegation since 1994 when an Israeli Arab delegation attended the funeral of Syrian President Hafez Al Assad's elder son Basil.

Last August Mr. Assad received a delegation including six Arab members of the Israeli parliament.

Last month an Israeli Arab MP made a one-week visit, during which he held two rounds of talks with Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam.



PASSERS-BY: Israeli paratroopers pass by an old Palestinian man while patrolling in the West Bank town of Hebron Sunday. Israel beefed up security Sunday ahead of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's meeting with U.S. President Clinton this week in Washington (AP photo)

Iraq hails scientists for Scud attacks on Israel

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq celebrated a "science day" on Sunday for the anniversary of its first Scud attacks on Israel during the 1991 Gulf war, rewarding Iraqi scientists behind the missile programme. Ministers handed out the awards at the ministry of higher education and research, where speakers lauded Iraq's achievement in becoming the first Arab

power to send missiles crashing into the heart of the Jewish state. It was the first time the anniversary was marked, following a decision taken by the Iraqi parliament last year. Iraq fired a total of 39 Scuds at Israel, starting from Jan. 18, 1991, the second day of the war over Kuwait.

The attacks — in which the Soviet-designed but

upgraded Scuds were pitted against U.S.-operated Patriot anti-missile batteries — caused heavy damage, notably in Tel Aviv. Since Iraq's ouster from Kuwait in the six-week conflict, U.N. weapons inspectors have been verifying the destruction of Iraqi missiles with a range of more than 150 km. An Iraqi official, asking not to be named, complained

Saturday over aspects of the work on eliminating the missiles, part of the disarmament process under the terms of the Gulf war ceasefire. "They insisted on knowing who fired the missiles... When they were finally located, they asked them: 'Who gave you the order?'" the official told AFP. "That all took more than nine months."

Khamenei receives growing support for anti-U.S. stand

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has been receiving growing support from various government and military bodies for his tough stand against the United States.

The administration, parliament, clerical establishment and the army have all issued statements defending Ayatollah Khamenei's tough speech on Friday, when he strongly rejected dialogue with the "Great Satan."

More than 200 deputies in the 270-member parliament signed a petition voicing "firm backing" for the leader's uncompromising stand, which slammed the door shut on any contact with Washington following hopes inspired early this month by comments by President Mohammad Khatami.

Mr. Khatami, a moderate who took office in August, called for dialogue between the people of Iran and the United States in an unprecedented address and interview broadcast on U.S.-based television network CNN.

The powerful Shiite Muslim clergy in the holy city of Qom, south of the capital, said Ayatollah Khamenei's speech "foiled a new plot by the criminal Americans, their media and agents to sow discord in the heart of our Islamic society."

The chief of staff of the armed forces, General Hussein Firuz Abadi, praised the ayatollah's "uncompromising, revolutionary" stand, saying "the Iranian people have no need to talk to the United States."

Even the moderate Culture

Minister, Ayatollah Mohajerani, who is the government spokesman, said Khamenei's remarks "are a response to those who distorted the president's speech on CNN."

"Some tried to distort the president's speech and [insinuate] that Iran...regretted having taken the [Americans] hostage," he said, quoted by IRNA.

Mr. Khatami said during his interview that he regretted the seizure of the U.S. embassy and personnel had hurt American feelings, but insisted that it was a natural cause of "unfair" American policies in Iran before the 1979 revolution.

Hardline conservatives had criticised the president for his remarks on the embassy seizure.

Farrakhan says Islamists not to blame in Algeria massacres

KHARTOUM (AFP) — U.S. Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan said here that Islamists were not to blame for the massacres carried out in Algeria and were the victims of a "machination."

"Holding Islamists responsible for killing women, children and innocent people is a machination by the West against Islam and Muslims," Mr. Far-

rakhan told a press conference Saturday at the end of a two-day visit to Khartoum.

"It is not logical that an Islamic party of such a broad popular base resorts to creating disturbance among its base. How can a party strike at those who voted for it in the general elections?" he said.

"What is happening in Algeria cannot be separated from the Western Satanic

machination against Sudan and Islam," said Mr. Farrakhan.

Hundreds of Algerians have been killed in a series of gruesome massacres since the start of Ramadan, on Dec. 30. Some estimates put the toll at more than 1,000.

The visit was the second to Sudan by Mr. Farrakhan after one at the end of 1996.

UAE paper urges Arab boycott of Britain over terrorism

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A government-run newspaper in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), in a rare attack on London, urged Arab states on Sunday to boycott Britain on the grounds it is encouraging terrorism against them.

Al Itihad said Britain had become a "haven and a permanent station for terrorists" and accused it of complicity in bloody terrorist attacks, especially by Islamists in Algeria and Egypt.

"Instructions are coming from [terrorists] in Britain to carry out mass killings of people without discrimination while conferences and seminars are being held on British territory to encourage terrorism," it said.

"Arabs and Muslims, who have been hurt most by terrorism, realise that Britain is maintaining silence towards the terrorists and their dens on its territory," it said.

"This country, which accuses some Arab states of terrorism, appears to be encouraging, indirectly and secretly, the killing of Arabs and destruction of their resources under the pretext of the respect of human rights," it added.

"Arabs are called upon to use their capabilities if Britain fails to redress its position towards

terrorism on its land. The measures could include an economic boycott of Britain or any other country."

Britain has also come under fire from Bahrain, Egypt and other Arab nations for hosting groups opposing to their regimes.

Britain, which had ruled the UAE and other Gulf states as protectorates for decades, until early 1970s, has denied such

charges.

"It seems that Britain wants to hear only its own voice and the voices of terrorists who live on its territory and enjoy protection," Al Itihad said.

"If Britain or any other country want strong economic ties with Arabs, which are extremely important to them, they should immediately ban any terrorist activity on their territory."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00 Holy Koran
14:10 Hannunman
14:30 French Programmes
16:15 Prayers
16:30 Believe and Believe
17:00 Riding Show
17:30 The Animal Show
18:00 Neighbours
18:30 News Headlines
18:35 Hope and Gloria
19:00 News in French
19:15 Ramadan Talks
19:35 The Health Show
20:01 Over a Cup of Tea
20:30 Country Music
21:10 Highlander
22:00 News in English
23:30 Emergency Room
23:15 Cosmos
23:59 Islam in a changing World

PRAYER TIMES

05:10 Fajr
06:31 Sunrise/Duha
11:46 Dhuhr
14:37 Asr
17:01 Maghreb
18:22 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh. Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.

632785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel.
771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church
Tel. 865897
Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 688404
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel.
675691.
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Skies will be partly cloudy with a possibility of rainfall and winds southwesterly moderate. On Tuesday, there will be a chance of scat-

tered showers with temperatures dipping slightly. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy to sunny, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 04/13
Aqaba 11/22
Deserts 04/14
Jordan Valley 09/20

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 12, Aqaba 28 Humidity
readings: Amman 40 per cent,
Aqaba 40 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim 385446
Dr. Arafat Al Ashhab 602507
Dr. Ayman Al Muhtaseb 875748
Dr. Jamal Jbarah 847351
Firas pharmacy 661912
Firdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 626762
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Fawzi Abul Hajja 252970
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Ya'qoub Al Khatib 9917720
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue
Unit 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 630321
Hotel Complaints 603800
Price Complaints 661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints
..... 787111
Telephone Information (directory
assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs 623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co. 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53201

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Luzmila 630195
Husseini Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity 644281/6
Akileh Maternity 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and
Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)905660
Rn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990900

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275

Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)247100

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen Alia
International Airport Tel.
(08)53200-5, where it should
always be verified. Information on
other flights can be supplied on
phone 08 (5274).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:00 Samaa (RJ)
08:25 Jeddah (RJ)
09:15 New Delhi (RJ)
09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:00 Beirut, Damascus (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:15 Wihran (add) (RJ)
18:05 Kuwait (RJ)
18:35 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
20:45 Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
23:15 Jakarta, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
00:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
00:45 Bangkok, Jakarta, Abu
Dhabi (RJ)

04:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

04:15 London (BA)
09:15 Cairo (MS)
09:30 Al Arish (PF)
12:00 Khartoum (SD)
13:25 Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Doha (QR)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
16:00 Dubai (EK)
18:00 Istanbul (SD)
20:00 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:30 Athens (OA)
01:25 Amsterdam (KL)

Royal Wings (RW)

06:05 Tel Aviv (RW)
07:25 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
07:15 Amman (Marka Airport)
(RW)
09:50 Aqaba (RW)
11:10 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
12:00 Amman (Marka Airport)
(RW)
21:20 Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport)
(RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20 Beirut, Damascus (RJ)
06:55 Wihran (add) (RJ)
11:00 Frankfurt, London (RJ)

12:05 Kuwait (RJ)

12:15 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)

12:30 Cairo (RJ)

19:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)

20:40 Damascus (RJ)

20:45 Abu Dhabi (RJ)

21:15 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)

22:45 Sanaa (RJ)

23:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

04:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

06:00 Istanbul (TK)
08:25 London (BA)
10:30 Al Arish (PF)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
13:20 Istanbul (SD)
14:15 Bahrain (GF)
15:50 Doha (QR)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
17:00 Damascus, Dubai (EK)
19:00 Khartoum (SD)
21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)
23:53 Damascus, Paris (AF)
02:25 Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)

05:30 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
06:50 Tel Aviv (RW)
07:55 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
08:50 Amman (Marka Airport)
(RW)
10:20 Aqaba (RW)
11:40 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50 Aqaba (RW)



ARBOR DAY: Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath take part in planting trees in Safawi region, in the Mafrqa Governorate. During the planting ceremony, Prince Hassan called for protecting the environment and developing the badia region (Photo courtesy of Al Ra'i)

Queen hosts iftar for Jubilee School students, donors

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor on Sunday hosted an iftar for the Jubilee School's students, staff and members of its steering committee, as well as Jordanians who have contributed to the school.

The iftar also included members of the United Nations University International Leadership Academy, whose International

Advisory Board the Queen chairs, as well as a core group of students who have been with the Noor Al Hussein Foundation's National Music Conservatory since its inception in 1986.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri attended the iftar with the Queen.



PRINCESS HOSTS IFTAR BANQUET: Her Royal Highness Princess Basma on Sunday hosts an iftar banquet for the orphans at Umm Al Hussein Orphanage. Princess Basma distributed gifts to 140 orphans. The Princess also hosted another banquet for Jordanian women (Petra photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Princess Haya hosts iftar for athletes
AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Haya on Sunday hosted an iftar banquet to honour the Jordanian athletes who took part in Arab and international games in 1997.

Majali sends condolences to Qatari leaders

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Sunday sent condolences to Sheikh Abdullah Ben Khalifah Al Thani of Qatar over the death of his mother Sheikhah Bent Jaber Al Thani. Dr. Majali also sent condolences to Sheikh Hamad Ben Jasssem Ben Jaber Al Thani, Qatari foreign minister.

Financial aid distributed to needy families

KARAK (Petra) — The National Aid Fund (NAF) on Sunday distributed financial aid to 150 needy families in Karak. NAF Director General Adel Shumayleh said donations will be distributed to 33,000 families throughout the Kingdom.

100 accidents on Saturday leave eight dead

AMMAN (Petra) — The Civil Defence Department (CDD) on Sunday announced that 100 accidents took place in the Kingdom on Saturday. The CDD said the accidents left eight people dead.

WHAT'S GOING ON

CONCERT

* "From Arabia to Andalusia" in concert, presented by Freddy For Music, at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m. (daily until Jan. 22).

FRENCH COMEDY CINEMA

* French comedy film "Fantôme avec chauffeur" at Philadelphia Cinema at 8:30 p.m. (Sponsored by the French Cultural Centre).

EXHIBITIONS

* "Gertrude Bell Exhibition" at the British Council, Jabal Amman, until Jan. 22.

* Display of Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NAF) products at the NAF Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Saqra Street (Tel. 699141/2), until Jan. 31 (8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.).

* Installation by Jordanian artist Ali Jabri (until Jan. 27). Also displaying contemporary Arab artist exhibition (until Jan. 27) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Al Weibdeh (Tel. 643251).

* Works by about a hundred artists from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).

Lower House to vote on draft budget Monday

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Lower House is set to vote Monday on the 1998 draft budget after a tough four-day debate in which deputies pressed the government on soaring poverty, unemployment and controversial economic reforms.

The House, already behind schedule, has to vote on the JD1.95 billion draft bill before the end of January to enable the government to start disbursing this year's allocations.

The budget, with a deficit of JD37 million, is 5.7 per cent higher than last year's and envisages total expenditures of

JD1.87 billion.

The House will vote on the bill after the government of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali replies to issues raised in lawmakers' speeches. The proposed budget has been attacked by many deputies on grounds that its limited spending will not help initiate programmes to battle poverty and unemployment.

Parliamentary analysts expect the budget to receive no more than 51 votes. Fifty-one deputies granted their vote of confidence to Dr. Majali's government on Dec. 15.

Over 60 deputies have discussed the budget in lengthy speeches, which

some also used to attack overall government policies, including its commitment to a fragile Middle East peace process that has failed to bring about many of the promised economic dividends.

Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty in 1994, but many Jordanians remain opposed to the deal after a 46-year state of war with the Jewish state. The hard-line policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in power since June 1996, have stripped many pro-peace supporters of their arguments.

But the issues of soaring unemployment, a widening gap between the rich and the poor and tough

policies to enforce the economic reforms agreed upon with International Monetary Fund (IMF) figured high in most speeches.

"Unemployment is the source of evil and the country's tragedy," said Islamist deputy Mohammed Azaidah. "Considering that, the draft budget does not refer to any national programmes with positive objectives that can give us the slightest glimpse of hope."

The government has put unemployment at 15 per cent of the total workforce, but independent estimates have placed it between 22 and 27 per cent.

"Our commitment to IMF recommendations have aggravated the problems of poverty and unemployment," leftist Deputy Nash'at Hamarneh said. "The policies of consecutive governments since the early seventies have driven the country to this depressed economic situation."

Jordan has said the IMF reforms have helped it restructure its foreign debt, trim deficits in the budget and balance of payments, and cut down inflation to single digits. The policies have also enabled the Kingdom to enter the global economy by adopting market-oriented policies.

Tourism ministry accelerating training of sector's new personnel

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji on Sunday said his ministry is speeding up the implementation of a training programme for personnel involved in the tourism sector.

Speaking at a meeting with a committee developing plans for the tourism sector as part of the country's 1998-2002 development plan, the minister noted that the current political circumstances in the Middle East have adversely affected the growth of the tourism sector.

Had there been political climate with fewer negative elements, Jordan would have witnessed a tourism boom, said the minister.

But "even if we had a boom at the moment, we would be facing the problem of providing sufficiently trained and qualified cadres to run services at the hotels and other tourist businesses," he said.

In a lecture delivered last month at Al Al Bayt University, Mr. Biltaji said Jordan witnessed a decline in 1997 in the number of tourists visiting its archaeological and tourist attractions compared to the previous year. However, he added this will not discourage the country from exerting efforts to improve tourist facilities.

Pointing out that the number of tourists in 1997 dropped by 5.5 per cent from the previous year, the minister said an increase in the average length of stay compensated for fewer tourists.

Ministry of Tourism sources said that at least four major five-star hotels are currently under construction in Amman at the total cost of JD100 million, and others are being built near the Dead Sea and the port of Aqaba.

At the meeting, Mr. Biltaji said the ministry will introduce new and practical methods to ensure development of the tourism industry.

To achieve sustainable tourism development, the minister said, Jordan needs new regulations. The country should also guarantee security for tourists and develop facilities at tourist and archaeological sites and include these plans in the five-year development programme.

Mr. Biltaji emphasised the need to raise awareness among the public about the importance of tourism for Jordan. In this respect, he said, the five-year tourism development plan should be based on civic society's institutions and helped by non-governmental organisations and a private sector with a greater role to ensure further investments.

Mr. Biltaji urged the committee to conduct a comprehensive survey of the more than 150,000 archaeological sites in the Kingdom.

The committee discussed the general outline of the five-year plan, projects to be given priority, and other relevant issues.

Father arrested for killing one-week-old daughter

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The father of a one-week-old girl has told interrogators that he killed his daughter to protect his honour, an official source said Sunday.

According to the official source, the 25-year-old father said he killed his daughter because she was conceived out of wedlock. The suspect's brother, who helped him carry out the homicide, was also arrested, the source added.

The couple were engaged in April, but the

suspect's wife became pregnant before the wedding, the source said.

The woman delivered the baby three months after their official wedding, but the husband said he felt ashamed of the matter. With the help of his brother, he plotted to kill his daughter to cleanse his family honour, the source told the Jordan Times.

The source said that a week after the baby was born, the suspect and his brother "dug a hole in the yard of their Ashrafieh home and buried the girl."

the source said.

The mother filed a complaint with the police after her daughter went missing "and informed the authorities that she feared her husband might be the killer," he said.

Meanwhile, the husband disappeared throughout that period until "his apprehension by the authorities last week."

"After questioning, the husband confessed that he killed his daughter to protect his honour and showed us the place where he buried her," Criminal Prosecutor

Imad Kilani, who is handling the case, ordered the transfer of the child's body to the National Institute for Forensic Medicine for an autopsy.

"We are waiting for an official autopsy result to determine if the child was buried alive," the source said.

The one-week-old child is the first female reportedly killed in a crime of honour in the Kingdom this year.

Last year, 25 women were reportedly killed in Jordan for reasons of honour.

NCP exploring ways to boost profile after disappointing elections showing

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The much-touted National Constitutional Party (NCP) is exploring ways to attract new members and boost its political profile after its disappointing performance in the Nov. 4 parliamentary elections, party officials said Sunday.

An independent commission of experts appointed by the NCP to assess the performance of the troubled group, born in May from a merger of nine centrist parties, said the party needs to restructure its basic organs and institutions.

"The report recommended that the NCP assess the number of its members and give more importance to the organisation of the work of the executive committee," NCP Spokesperson Hakim

Khair told the Jordan Times. He said the report was "very comprehensive, detailed and highly objective."

Only two of 11 NCP candidates fielded in the race won seats in the 80-member Lower House of Parliament. A heavy blow after the party suggested it would score huge victories and become a major political power.

The Islamic Action Front (IAF), the NCP's main opponent and at one time the single largest political group in the Lower House, boycotted the elections to protest government policies. The Islamists' boycott reinforced speculations that the NCP could become the single largest party in the House, dominated by centrist, tribal leaders and pro-government figures.

But personal feuds and rivalries provoked subse-

quent waves of resignations, with some 200 members quitting the NCP to protest the lack of democracy in the party. The resignations shortly before the ballot helped weaken the party and discredit its performance.

The evaluation report suggested that the NCP "entered the elections without enough attention to the political forces which were interacting in the election process," Dr. Khair said.

In a late "mea culpa," the report also suggested that the party did not provide candidates with sufficient financial or logistical support, Dr. Khair added.

In addition, "Voters did not have the time or willingness to read the party's political platform, which took us about three months to prepare and includes all issues, whether domestic, regional or international," he added.

"The party's platform was written by highly specialised and qualified people and could have been an excellent programme to solve many of the outstanding issues facing Jordan today, particularly the three crucial problems of poverty, unemployment and rising cost of living," he said.

"In order not to repeat the mistakes committed during the period of the NCP's establishment," Dr. Khair said, the party's strengths and weaknesses as indicated in the report will be the focus of an upcoming national convention, to be held "between May and June."

"We are pleased with the report, and think it is a healthy endeavour. We will try to restructure our party on a more solid basis, taking into consideration the experts' recommendations," Dr. Khair concluded.

Employment fund figures indicate JD3.5 million in loans awarded last year

AMMAN (Petra) — The Employment and Development Fund (EDF) last year financed 860 projects through JD3.5 million in loans granted to 1,649 citizens, according to EDF Director General Ali Qubbaa.

In a statement released Sunday, Mr. Qubbaa said the

loans were given directly to unemployed citizens wishing to start small businesses or indirectly through charitable organisations.

Mr. Qubbaa said that since its inception in 1991 through the end of 1997, the EDF financed 5,630 projects through both direct and indirect loans totalling

JD21,374,521.

The EDF was established to provide funds for projects by unemployed citizens in a bid to combat poverty and unemployment in Jordan.

According to Mr. Qubbaa, some of last year's loans financed 147 projects in the Amman area, 83 in Irbid, 220 in Zarqa, 23 in Balqa, 29

in Ma'an, 28 in Karak, 16 in Tafleh, 25 in Mafrqa, 13 in Madaba, 15 in Ajloun, 16 in Jerash, and 23 in Aqaba.

He said 5.7 per cent of the loans went to the services sector, 32.5 per cent to the industrial sector, 8.1 per cent to the handicraft sector, and 3.7 per cent the tourism sector.

France, Jordan Valley Authority sign agreement to improve irrigation system

AMMAN (Petra) — France is to grant Jordan technical aid worth \$48,840 to help it improve the irrigation system in the Jordan Rift Valley, according to an agreement signed Sunday in Amman.

Under the agreement, which was signed by Dureid Mahasneh, secretary general of the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA), and French Ambassador to Jordan Bernard Bajole, the French government will also cover the expenses of French engineers who will be working with the JVA.

The agreement will be renewed annually provided the required funds are available.

Following the signing ceremony, Dr. Mahasneh said the agreement was of paramount importance as it entails closer cooperation between the JVA and the French embassy and involves local Jordan Valley farmers in the use of modern equipment.

The agreement also follows technical advice from the French to the JVA in changing the present water distribution system and agricultural extension services and in developing the present irrigation system in the valley, he added.

Dr. Mahasneh said Jordan is facing a scarcity of water resources due to the growing demand by all sectors, especially the agri-

cultural sector, which consumes the lion share.

Dr. Mahasneh also praised the cooperation between France and Jordan over the past few years. He noted that French assistance in the past several years to the water sector in Jordan has amounted to 3.5 million French francs (\$569,800).

The French aid contributed to the development of a major part of the irrigation system and financed the cost of feasibility studies and the preparation of tender documents for the projected Al Mujib Dam in southern Jordan, he added.

Dr. Mahasneh expressed hope that the agreement

would help attract investors for this important project, which he said is bound to save up to 60 per cent of water supplies.

Mr. Bajole said the agreement reflects the ongoing cooperation between France and the JVA to help farmers economise in the consumption of water for irrigation without affecting the agricultural process. He added that the project will help Jordan ensure sufficient water supplies for increased food production.

The ambassador said he considered the agreement as the foundation for using modern technology in Jordan to expand its irrigation network in the valley.

China to work for 'strategic partnership' with U.S. — Chi

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese Defence Minister Chi Haotian welcomed U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen here Sunday, pledging China's best effort to achieve a "constructive strategic partnership" with the United States.

Toasting each other with fiery rice brandy in the Great Hall of People, the two men kicked off a three day visit aimed at deepening ties between the U.S. and Chinese militaries.

"China will do its very best in order to seek the goal of establishing a constructive, strategic partnership between our two countries and also to achieve the goal in this regard," Mr. Chi said.

He thanked Mr. Cohen for the U.S. military's help in responding to a recent earthquake in China, saying through an interpreter, "a friend in need is a friend indeed."

Mr. Cohen thanked China for the return last year of identification tags of

crewmembers of a U.S. bomber shot down over China during World War II, and said it was a reminder that China and the United States fought side by side in World War II.

Noting the economic difficulties and tensions in the Asia Pacific region today, Mr. Cohen said, "it is more important than ever to remind ourselves that we stood shoulder to shoulder in the past, and we should stand shoulder to shoulder in the future."

Mr. Cohen stressed that the United States and China would have to work together to achieve harmony in their relations, and avoid misunderstanding.

"General Chi, we are here tonight and the next several days to deal with issues before they happen and to set things in order before there is confusion," Mr. Cohen said.

Less than two years ago, the United States and China squared off over Taiwan with President Bill Clinton sending two aircraft carriers

to the western Pacific to counter menacing Chinese missile tests and exercises.

China's efforts to modernise its military and expand its reach into the Pacific also has been followed with keen interest in Washington.

The Pentagon hopes to persuade the Chinese military to be more open about its military plans and goals so that its intentions are not misunderstood.

In a gesture of openness, the Chinese invited Mr. Cohen to visit the Beijing Air Defence Command Centre, a facility so secret that the Chinese had not even acknowledged its existence until last week, a U.S. military official said.

The invitation to visit the command centre finally arrived three days ago. Only 15 members of the defence secretary's entourage will be allowed in the facility Monday, and the Chinese insisted on having their names in advance. Yet, Mr. Cohen's visit will be the first for an American.

Monday, Mr. Cohen and Mr. Chi also will sign a Maritime Military Cooperation Agreement establishing channels for military consultations aimed at drawing up "rules of the road" to avoid incidents at sea.

Mr. Cohen also is scheduled to deliver a speech Monday at the Academy of Military Science, and to meet with Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and the Commander of the General Staff of the Peoples Liberation Army, General Fu Quanyou. Tuesday, the secretary meets with President Jiang Zemin before leaving for Japan.

Mr. Cohen was officially welcomed by a Chinese honour guard at a military museum amid displays of vintage military staff cars and machine guns.

He strode past a towering statue of Mao Zedong, and wall-sized portraits of Lenin, Stalin, Marx and Engels into a chilly hall to review troops from all the services.



U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen (right) and China's Defence Minister Chi Haotian (left) review an honour guard of elite Chinese troops during a red carpet welcome ceremony in the People's Liberation Army Museum in Beijing (Reuters photo)

Chinese activist urges presidential action over labour arrests

BEIJING (AFP) — Labour activist Wang Hongxue made a bold call Sunday on Chinese President Jiang Zemin to release a string of dissenters protesting government lay-offs and to permit free trade unions.

"Someone has to stand up for China's workers after so many of them have been reduced to such a miserable situation and not even their basic rights are guaranteed," Mr. Wang said in a telephone interview with AFP.

"I have written to Chinese President Jiang Zemin to ask him to order the police to stop persecuting people who are trying to protect the rights of workers and to release those already in prison, like Li Qingxi," he added.

Police in Shanxi province's Datong city picked up Li Qingxi at his home late Friday after he publicly posted a declaration calling for free and independent trade unions.

While a police spokesman denied Sunday that Mr. Li was in detention, his son said in a telephone interview that he had been told to take daily necessities to his father at the city's detention centre Monday.

In a second case, security officials at Nuclear Industry General Co.'s No. 813 factory in Hanzhong city detained activist-worker Zhao Changping in his dormitory room.

Simmering discontent

over large-scale redundancies from state companies has grown since veteran dissident Qin Yongmin — who is defying police orders to leave the country — issued his Dec. 22 declaration urging workers across China to begin a determined but legal push for independent unions.

Saturday in Washington, three exiled Chinese dissidents met U.S. representatives and officials from the State Department to discuss growing labour unrest in China, according to the Hong Kong-based Information Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China.

The three dissidents, Wang Xizhe, Wang Juntao and Liu Gang, urged Washington to pressure China to fulfil its commitments under the U.N. Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by allowing free trade unions.

They also met U.S. representative Nancy Pelosi who pledged to bring up the issue with U.S. President Bill Clinton and urge him to push China to allow free trade unions, the information centre said.

But Mr. Wang warned of immediate danger from growing tension between workers and the Chinese government.

"The illegal arrest of Li Qingxi is sure to arouse the anger of workers in China,

and will be fully opposed by them," Mr. Wang said.

"All such persecution, both direct and indirect, must be stopped," he said, adding that police in his home city of Bengbu, Anhui province, had tried to get him admitted to a mental hospital because of his outspoken stance.

China is undergoing a major overhaul of its loss-making state enterprises and is expected to lay off around 11 million workers this year. Growing fears of major unrest from these sacked workers have prompted a sharp crackdown on all those daring to voice their opposition, with Communist authorities well aware that an organised labour movement could become a political rival along the lines of Poland's Solidarity movement.

In a further indication of Beijing's hard line on labour dissent, the New York-based Human Rights in China said Sunday that the capital's public security bureau had refused an application for a demonstration from dismissed military workers.

The human rights watchdog said Li Rui, a worker at the 3501 military clothing factory in Beijing who was made redundant at the end of November, had applied for permission to demonstrate against her layoff and those of colleagues, but her request was dismissed outright.

Northern Ireland talks to resume under cloud

BELFAST (AFP) — Northern Ireland peace talks were set to resume Monday under a cloud after Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), rejected Anglo-Irish proposals.

Sinn Fein accused London and Dublin of bending to pro-British unionist and loyalist demands in framing the proposals, but said it would nonetheless attend the talks to defend the cause of a united Ireland.

There was no immediate reaction to the Sinn Fein statement from other parties to the talks. Analysts said the other parties were apparently intent on playing down the potential impact.

In an interview with the Sunday Telegraph, David Trimble, leader of the main Protestant party, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), was cautiously optimistic about the peace process.

He believed it was unlikely that Sinn Fein would endorse an agreement based on the Anglo-Irish proposals to be submitted to a referendum in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, although Sinn Fein might find itself forced to operate within

that framework. It was important, he stressed, to keep John Hume's moderate Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party or the Irish government from joining forces with Sinn Fein in opposing a final agreement.

Mr. Trimble believed a Northern Ireland referendum could be won even without the support of Sinn Fein or the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the second-largest Protestant grouping which is boycotting the talks.

"If we can get the right sort of political outcome to this, then I can see a situation where the ideological motor within Sinn Fein will be broken," Mr. Trimble said.

In a BBC interview Saturday, Sinn Fein chief negotiator Martin McGuinness said of the Anglo-Irish proposals: "I think it is fair to say that this document has gone down very badly within Sinn Fein."

"We have not accepted the document as a basis for negotiation and we intend going to the talks to oppose the document," he added.

Sinn Fein made its position known as London prepared to make a significant gesture towards the Catholic camp next week, British government sources said.

London would either order a new investigation into the Bloody Sunday events of 1972 in Londonderry or would apologise to the families of the 14 people killed by the army at that time, the sources said.

Britain and Ireland presented their latest peace formula in hopes it would lead to a settlement by May, after months of impasse and a recent flare-up in extremist attacks.

The formula called for three bodies to function simultaneously: a parliament elected by proportional vote which should have the support of both communities, a ministerial council and a Council of the Isles.

The ministerial council would include officials from the Northern Ireland assembly and Irish ministers.

London suggested a "Council of the Isles" which would include representatives from London, Dublin and the three future autonomous regions of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, a proposal the Unionists backed.

Bosnian Serb deputies elect new government, end dispute

BIJELJINA, Bosnia Herzegovina (AFP) — The Bosnian Serb parliament elected a prime minister and government for their Serb republic Sunday after weeks of wrangles between hardliners and moderates.

The breakthrough was achieved after hardline deputies loyal to indicted warcrimes suspect Radovan Karadzic walked out of the parliamentary debate allowing the others to vote in the 20-member government.

Hardliners had opposed the appointment as prime minister of Milorad Dodik, backed by Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic, on the grounds that he would "sell out" the interests of the Serb Republic to Muslims and Croats in Bosnia.

Mr. Dodik, a well-known moderate, said he favours working with the leaders of Bosnia's Muslim-Croat Federation in Sarajevo and would respect the Dayton peace accords that ended the Balkan republic's conflict in 1995.

Loyalists of Mr. Karadzic, who lost their majority in the parliament in early elections last year, have long opposed the implementation of the Dayton agreement and shunned cooperation with their former Muslim and Croat foes.

The decision was taken after 12 hours of stormy debate and ends drawn out arguments over the appointment of a premier. Mr. Dodik himself, was chosen after an earlier candidate withdrew saying that he could not find enough support in parliament.

While hardliners are the largest group in parliament with some 39 seats out of 83 in the Republika Srpska (RS) assembly, no one group holds a majority.

Sunday's vote was achieved with 42 deputies were left which included representatives of Muslim and Croat refugees who were expelled from Serb controlled parts of Bosnia during the war.

Bosnia's international mediator, Carlos Westendorp said he was happy that a government had been elected and promised that: "The international community is ready to help this government."

There was no immediate reaction from the ultra-nationalists to the formation of a government which they are not expected to accept. Nor does Sunday's breakthrough end the deep divisions in the Serb camp.

The Republika Srpska, which rules on half of Bosnia, remains effectively split with two centres of power: one grouped around Plavsic in Banja Luka, the other in the regional capital of Pale.

Throughout Saturday, the hardliners had multiplied attacks on Mr. Plavsic accusing her of "obeying the occupying forces" — a reference to the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia.

Pro-Karadzic forces have been locked in dispute with Ms. Plavsic who enjoys Western support for her efforts to implement the Dayton peace accords, since last summer when she denounced the outgoing administration as corrupt.

Friday, Mr. Westendorp warned that Saturday's session was the deputies' "last chance" to elect a prime minister. He hinted that unless they did so, the international community might step in to resolve the crisis.

Cambodian elections at risk of not being free and fair — U.N. official

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodia's scheduled July election is at risk of not being free and fair as Phnom Penh has yet to take any significant steps toward solving serious human rights problems, a senior U.N. official said Sunday.

"There are very serious problems ... nothing has happened," Thomas Hammarberg, the U.N. secretary general's special representative for Human Rights in Cambodia, told reporters on arrival here for a 10-day visit.

"There is a very short time (until the election) and there is much hard work to be done," he said. "Of course it is (at risk)."

Mr. Hammarberg, who will be joined here later this week by U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, said the chief problem in preparing for the polls remained impunity for people who committed human rights abuses.

He noted that he had still had no response from the government to appeals for progress reports on investigations into scores of extrajudicial killings.

More than 40 supporters of deposed co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh's supporters

were killed following his effective ouster in July by powerful Second Prime Minister Hun Sen.

In December, Mr. Hammarberg registered keen disappointment at the government's failure to pursue promises to investigate the killings.

"I have not yet received any indication of progress," he said Sunday. "Six months have passed since the executions. These delays are serious in themselves. The lack of investigations will have effects on the election."

A large number of Prince Ranariddh's supporters, fearing persecution after July, fled the country. Many observers regard their safe return and ability to participate in the polls, as well as that of the prince, as a precondition for the election to be judged free and fair.

Mr. Hammarberg said he was "confused" by recent comments from a European Union delegation that said its \$11.5 million grant to help fund the polls would not be conditioned on the return of the prince or his supporters.

But he declined to comment on the issue until he had had a chance to speak with officials from the

EU, noting that his native country of Sweden was an EU member.

However, he said EU money intended to fund the operations of 30 election monitors would cover only a small part of the funds needed.

"There should be a great number of monitors to cover the election," he said, noting however that money would be a major obstacle to the placement of enough observers.

Mr. Hammarberg, a former secretary general of Amnesty International, also said he would continue to push ahead in his efforts to bring the leadership of the Khmer Rouge guerrilla faction to justice, as it contributed to the problem of impunity in Cambodia.

He said he would propose sending a three-strong team of "high-level" international experts to look into the possibility of an international genocide and war crimes tribunal that would report back to the U.N.

The Khmer Rouge are blamed for the deaths of as many as two million Cambodians from starvation, disease, overwork and execution during their nearly four-year reign in the 1970s.

U.S. passed British secrets to IRA, says former U.S. ambassador

LONDON (AFP) — The United States passed sensitive material gathered by British intelligence to the Irish Republican Army (IRA), according to former U.S. ambassador to London, Raymond Seitz.

Mr. Seitz, who was appointed ambassador by former U.S. President George Bush and served from 1991-94, makes the charge in his memoirs, extracts of which were published in the Sunday Telegraph newspaper.

The memoirs are openly critical of U.S. President Bill Clinton's policy towards Northern Ireland, prior to the IRA ceasefire of August, 1994.

In particular, Mr. Seitz ridicules Washington's decision to grant a visa in February 1994 to Gerry Adams — leader of the IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein — calling it a "fiasco of political amateurism."

Following that decision, Mr. Seitz writes: "London even stopped passing intelligence to the White House because it often seemed to find its way to the IRA."

Questioned on his claim by the Sunday Telegraph Saturday, Mr. Seitz said: "I could elaborate further but it would not be proper."

According to the newspaper, some elements within the White House were so keen to demonstrate their friendship with Adams and his Sinn Fein colleagues, "that they were communicating secret information gleaned by MI5 and MI6 in Northern Ireland."

Some of that information was sensitive enough to put members of the British security forces in Northern Ireland at risk, the newspaper added.

In his memoirs, Mr. Seitz also accuses the U.S. Ambassador to Dublin, Jeann Kennedy Smith — sister of Senator Edward Kennedy — of being an "ardent IRA apologist," as well as a "promotion agent for Gerry Adams."

Deposed Cambodian prince seems 'receptive' to truce as fighting subsides

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Deposed Cambodian co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh appears "receptive" to new ceasefire terms proposed by Phnom Penh, the country's leading dissident said Sunday as fighting between the warring factions subsided after two days of intense battles.

"Prince Ranariddh said he would think about it," former Finance Minister Sam Rainsy told reporters after speaking with the exiled prince. "In my opinion, the prince appears to be receptive. He sounded receptive."

The dissident said the prince would be travelling from France to Thailand Tuesday to discuss the ceasefire with his commanders and would make a decision then on whether to accept the terms offered by powerful Second Prime Minister Hun Sen.

"I really hope Prince Ranariddh agrees," Sam Rainsy said, adding that he had already spoken to the resistance commander

to lobby for acceptance of the proposal. "I told them they have nothing to lose by accepting these conditions," he said.

Meanwhile, Thai military sources reported that fighting around the resistance's besieged military headquarters of O'Smach on the northern Cambodian border eased Sunday in the aftermath of battles which saw more than 300 shells land in Thailand over the past two days. "It is regular that the fighting will be quiet after a few days of heavy fighting," one source said.

Four Thai soldiers had been injured by stray shells in the past two days, and the Thai army had fired more than 20 shells a day at Cambodian government positions in retaliation, military sources said.

Thai villagers have been advised to build bunkers in preparation for more wayward artillery fire, they said.

Sam Rainsy said he was

surprised fighting intensified as he said Hun Sen had promised him while delivering the new ceasefire terms Friday that no major attacks would be ordered while the conditions were being considered.

Those conditions would allow Prince Ranariddh's troops to remain in their areas of control without having to disarm or disarm and move freely into Phnom Penh controlled zones as long as they did not carry weapons.

In return they would agree to halt all attacks on Phnom Penh's troops, reveal their positions, manpower and materiel strength.

Prince Ranariddh's supporters have been fighting Hun Sen's troops since July when Hun Sen effectively ousted the prince in a weekend of fierce fighting in the capital.

Sam Rainsy is promoting the ceasefire as a necessary element towards this July's scheduled elections being free and fair.

Bosnian
Serb
deputies
elect new
government
end dispute

BIJELJINA, Bosnia (AFP) — The Bosnian Serb parliament elected a new government after a week of wrangling between hardline and moderate factions.

The breakthrough achieved after the deputies' vote to elect Radovan Karadzic out of the parliament debate allowing them to vote in the new government.

Hardline, had the appointment of a minister of War, Mr. Dodik, backed by the Serb President, Mr. Milosevic, on the grounds that he would not let the interests of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina be harmed.

Mr. Dodik, a moderate, said he was working with the Bosnian Muslim Federation in Sarajevo to respect the peace accord signed in 1995.

Mr. Dodik, who has been in the front line of the conflict, said he was working with the Bosnian Muslim Federation in Sarajevo to respect the peace accord signed in 1995.

Mr. Dodik, who has been in the front line of the conflict, said he was working with the Bosnian Muslim Federation in Sarajevo to respect the peace accord signed in 1995.

Mr. Dodik, who has been in the front line of the conflict, said he was working with the Bosnian Muslim Federation in Sarajevo to respect the peace accord signed in 1995.

Mr. Dodik, who has been in the front line of the conflict, said he was working with the Bosnian Muslim Federation in Sarajevo to respect the peace accord signed in 1995.

Mr. Dodik, who has been in the front line of the conflict, said he was working with the Bosnian Muslim Federation in Sarajevo to respect the peace accord signed in 1995.

Mr. Dodik, who has been in the front line of the conflict, said he was working with the Bosnian Muslim Federation in Sarajevo to respect the peace accord signed in 1995.

Mr. Dodik, who has been in the front line of the conflict, said he was working with the Bosnian Muslim Federation in Sarajevo to respect the peace accord signed in 1995.

Mr. Dodik, who has been in the front line of the conflict, said he was working with the Bosnian Muslim Federation in Sarajevo to respect the peace accord signed in 1995.

Mr. Dodik, who has been in the front line of the conflict, said he was working with the Bosnian Muslim Federation in Sarajevo to respect the peace accord signed in 1995.

Japanese
company sold
record-price
Renoir at loss

TOKYO (AFP) — A debt-ridden Japanese company sold a 19th century Renoir painting, bought for a record \$78 million in 1990, at a loss, letting it go for \$50 million, a national daily said Sunday.

"Le Moulin de la Galette" by Pierre-Auguste Renoir was sold by paper-pulp sales company Daishowa Ashitaka around May last year, the Yomiuri Shimbun quoted Daishowa group sources as saying.

The identity of the buyer was unknown, but it is someone who lives outside Japan, the daily said.

Daishowa Ashitaka is a subsidiary of Daishowa Paper Mfg. Co. Ltd., headed by Ryoei Saito, who paid \$78 million for the painting at a Sotheby's auction in New York in 1990.

The price was a record for a work by the French painter and second only to the \$82.5 million paid also by Saito for "Portrait of Doctor Gashet" by Vincent van Gogh at Christie's auction in the same year.

Art experts said Japan holds nearly 10,000 masterpieces, most from the Impressionist period, with many bought at the end of the 1980s at inflated prices.

A study by the economic newspaper Nihon Keizai estimated the value of the art treasures held by Japanese companies at \$3.8 to \$11.5 billion. An art dealer based in Tokyo told AFP "an American collector, among the three or four with the capacity to do so, was a possible buyer of the Renoir, believed to have been sold through a private sale by Sotheby's or Christie's."

The dealer said the buyer has been looking for a long time to acquire the Renoir painting as well as Van Gogh's "Portrait of Doctor Gashet," which is also owned by Daishowa Paper.

The price of the Van Gogh painting topped an earlier record of \$53.9 million in 1987 paid for Van Gogh's "Irises." The Renoir painting used to be owned by Betsey Cushing Whitney, heiress of John Hay Whitney, diplomat, publisher of the New York Herald Tribune and president of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

The painting depicts a crowd dancing in a celebrated cafe in Montmartre at the end of the 19th century.

Saito, former chairman of Daishowa Paper, died of a stroke in March 1996, drawing international criticism while on his sickbed by saying he loved paintings so much he hoped to be cremated with paintings in his coffin. He later denied making the remark.

The Yomiuri said Saito had sold "Le Moulin de la Galette" to a subsidiary firm Daishowa Ashitaka, which he set up to sell paper and pulp.

The subsidiary offered the painting as collateral on huge amounts of loans from Daishowa Paper in 1994, the daily said.

As it became almost impossible for Daishowa Paper to collect loans from the subsidiary, it allowed Daishowa Ashitaka to sell the painting as part of efforts to repay the debts even at a loss, the daily said.



Homes continue to burn in the Mount Nelson suburb after a bushfire swept through the southern suburbs of the Tasmanian state capital city of Hobart (Reuters photo)

Five homes destroyed in
latest Australian bushfire

HOBART, Australia (AFP) — More than 300 firefighters were battling to contain a bushfire threatening homes in the southern suburbs of Hobart after five houses were destroyed by the blaze in the early hours of Sunday.

Most of the homes were unoccupied with "for sale" signs on them, and firefighters believe a policy of encouraging householders to remain in their properties rather than to evacuate has helped save some.

Nobody was reported injured in the fire, which was believed to have been deliberately started in the foothills of Mount Wellington.

At one stage it jumped a main highway south from Hobart to threaten Taroom, a suburb on the Derwent River. Flames fanned by gusting hot northerly winds shot high into the sky, visible for miles around the city, in the south of Australia's island state of Tasmania.

The fires had burnt out more than 2,000 hectares around the southern suburbs of Taroom, Albion Heights and Kingston by mid afternoon and residents were still being urged to stay in their homes to help firefighters.

The Australian Labour Party's national conference was getting under way nearby in Hobart.

Tasmania's Fire Commissioner John Gledhill told a news conference that bulldozers would be used to construct firebreaks to try to control the blaze.

"With the lack of rain that we've had and the forecast that doesn't give us a lot of hope, we're assuming that it's going to go on for some time," he said.

The power authority had to switch off electricity to some suburbs because of the fire and a number of main roads were closed. Six people including four firefighters have died in bushfires across Australia since early December.

India Communists willing to head
government — leader

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's leading Communist party announced Sunday it would not say "no" if called upon to head a coalition government following upcoming elections.

The Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) said the party had changed its earlier stance of not joining a government in New Delhi in the event of a hung parliament.

"There is a change in our stand. Now we don't say we won't participate in the government," the Press Trust of India quoted CPI-M General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet as saying in the southern city of Trivandrum.

The CPI-M played a key role in hurriedly putting together a United Front coalition after the 1996 polls produced a split parliament, giving no party enough seats to take office on its own.

The United Front, made up of a dozen centrist, leftist and regional groups, eventually took power on June 1 with the legislative backing of the Congress party.

However, the CPI-M refused to join the government and turned down requests to head a ministry. The party's most prominent leader, Jyoti Basu, had been urged by other parties to become the prime minister.

Mr. Basu, in a rare public outburst, later called his party's decision a "historic blunder." Since then, the headline CPI-M has been divided between those favouring and those opposed to joining a new federal government.

The veteran Communist has been heading a coalition led by the CPI-M in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal since June 1977.

The CPI-M's comments Sunday came a week after Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born widow of slain former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, plunged into politics in the run-up to the February-March ballot.

Sonia Gandhi, 51, has become the star campaigner for her husband's moribund Congress party and its de-facto leader, sidelining its highly unpopular President Sitaran Kesri.

She is, however, not a candidate in the elections.

Also Sunday, outgoing Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral hinted he would be in the running for the top post if the United Front coalition managed to retain power.

Mr. Gujral, who became prime minister in April as a consensus candidate, said he had brought dignity to his office.

"There was no allegation of corruption against the prime minister (during my tenure)... It is not a small thing. It is happening after many decades."

Serb official faces war crimes
trial for Vukovar massacre

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Serb war crimes suspect Slavko Dokmanovic, the former mayor of Vukovar in Croatia, goes on trial here Monday on charges relating to the massacre of 261 people in 1991.

Dokmanovic, was mayor of Vukovar, a city on Croatia's eastern border with Serbia which was captured by the mainly-Serb Yugoslav National army (JNA) in November 1991 after a highly destructive siege that marked the bloodiest incident of the four year conflict in Croatia.

He has denied the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity brought by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former

Yugoslavia (ICTY). At the time the town fell, many took refuge in Vukovar's hospital where injured soldiers and civilians were being treated.

Victorious JNA soldiers and Serb militia took the patients and others to the small village of Ovchara several kilometers away, and summarily executed most of them.

Some 200 bodies have since been exhumed from a mass grave uncovered in 1996 by ICTY investigators in Ovchara, of which 73 have been identified by relatives.

According to the tribunal, Dokmanovic is directly implicated in the massacre, together with three former Yugoslav army officers — Mile Mrksic, Veselin Slij-

vancanin and Miroslav Radic — all of whom remain at liberty. While Mrksic and Radic are now believed to have fled the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, ICTY officials say Slijvancanin is in Belgrade at the prestigious National Defence College which trains officers for the Yugoslav military.

Despite strong international pressure, Belgrade has repeatedly refused to hand over the three men, arguing that extradition of its own nationals is unconstitutional.

There is no doubt that their appearance in court would be a serious source of embarrassment to Belgrade, given that at the time the JNA was answer-

able only to Serb leaders, including Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. Dokmanovic was arrested on June 27 in Eastern Slavonia, the last Serb-held part of Croatia, after he was secretly indicted on six charges by the U.N. tribunal in March 1996.

His lawyers argued that he had been illegally "kidnapped" after being lured to Eastern Slavonia by U.N. authorities. The court ruled last year that the arrest was legal.

Clinton completes six-hour grilling
by lawyers in sex harassment case

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton came face to face here with the worst nightmare of his second term — Paula Jones, the woman who accuses him of sexually harassing her.

Ms. Jones, initially dismissed as "trailer trash" by Mr. Clinton backers, watched Saturday as the most powerful man in the world was grilled for nearly six hours by her lawyers on matters of a deeply personal nature.

Ms. Jones, 31, asserts that Mr. Clinton had her escorted to a hotel room in Little Rock, Arkansas when he was governor there in 1991 and she a low-level state employee.

She alleges he dropped his pants and asked her for oral sex. Mr. Clinton denies the allegations.

Ms. Jones is claiming \$2 million in damages for sexual harassment and violation of her civil rights.

The deposition marks the first time a sitting U.S. president has testified as a defendant in a court case.

A gagging order has been imposed on the videotaped proceedings and it was unclear what was said or whether the deposition had in fact been completed or would be resumed at a later date.

Also present at the deposition were Mr. Clinton's team of four lawyers, six attorneys representing Ms. Jones, a technician taping the testimony, a court stenographer and Judge Susan Webber Wright, who flew in from Little Rock and is presiding over the case.

Ms. Webber, a registered Republican and, ironically, Mr. Clinton's student at the University of Arkansas law school years ago, has imposed the news blackout.

Ms. Jones was not permitted to speak at the proceedings.

Mr. Clinton did not comment after the deposition. Neither did Ms. Jones, apparently shaken by the media crush.

"I've worked for 18 years and never seen anything like this," said Ms. Jones' spokeswoman, Susan Carpenter McMillan, commenting on the media frenzy. "It was a zoo, a circus."

The Washington Post reported Saturday that Mr. Clinton was expected to deny the accusation of sexual harassment but would not dispute the account of his former bodyguard, Arkansas state trooper Danny Ferguson, a co-defendant in the case who said in a deposition that he escorted Ms. Jones to Mr. Clinton's hotel suite.

Though Mr. Clinton still asserts that he does not remember meeting Ms. Jones, for the first time he is admitting she came to his suite, the daily said.

In a significant tactical switch by his defence team, the case now apparently centres on what went on inside the suite.

Both sides appear resigned to a trial and a date has been fixed for May 27. The case will boil down to Mr. Clinton's word against Ms. Jones', with a jury of 12 being asked to reach a unanimous conclusion.

Mr. Clinton may choose not to testify at the trial, in which case his videotaped deposition will be unsealed.

If the case ever goes to court and Mr. Clinton has to testify "it will make the O.J. Simpson case look like a minor blip," retired U.S. district court judge H. Lee Sarokin told CNN.

The case comes at a time when Mr. Clinton enjoys the highest popularity ratings of his presidency, with more than 60 per cent of Americans approving of his performance.

Ms. Jones has little popular support but was mobbed by the media in a Hollywood celebrity-style reception when she arrived for the deposition. TV news reporters filmed her dining in a restaurant with her husband and a group of supporters late Saturday.

According to a CNN/Time magazine poll, half the public thinks she is lying and only a third believes her. Two out of three people have an unfavourable opinion of her.

The Clinton administration shifted the deposition from the White House to the office of Mr. Clinton's personal lawyer, Robert Bennett, to deny Ms. Jones the advantage of being seen entering the building.

Mr. Clinton, meanwhile, hid behind tinted car windows in a motorcade flanked by a formidable Secret Service presence for the two-block trip to and from Mr. Bennett's office.

1 killed, 30 injured as Pakistani train ploughs into oil tanker

MULTAN, Pakistan (AFP) — A passenger train ploughed into an oil truck in a central Pakistani town Sunday killing the train's fireman and injuring at least 30 passengers, railway officials said.

Seven coaches of the Karachi-bound Tezrao Express were derailed while its engine was badly damaged, they said.

Officials said the accident occurred at an unmanned level crossing in the town of Khanpur, some 227 kilometers southwest of here when the oil tanker suddenly appeared on the track.

The driver of the train applied its brakes but failed to stop and it slammed into the vehicle.

The oil tanker was totally destroyed and its driver critically injured, witnesses said.

They said the fireman of the train died soon after the collision and the condition of the train driver was also reported to be serious in hospital.

The accident disrupted railway traffic on the main Islamabad-Karachi track, officials said; adding that relief trains had been rushed from nearby stations and rescue work was in progress.

Celebrate Ramadan with Our Unbeatable New Service.



For your dad



For your assistant



For your kids



For your sales team



For your company messenger



For your wife

The New Fastlink Sadiq Service

- Outgoing calls restricted to one predesignated mobile number.
- Helps you budget usage of the mobile line.
- Unlimited free incoming calls.
- Lowest available 24 hours flat rate.
- Free emergency calls on (112).

Service	Deposit	Activation	Monthly Subscription	Call Tariff Mobile-Mobile
Sadiq*	JD 45	JD 45	JD 15	110 Fils

* Sadiq service is available for phase 2 mobile phones only.

Offer valid until end of Ramadan.

For further information call us at Amman-863750, Al-Tayebat Village-770770 Aqaba-03-2022557, Irbid-02-251681, 111 on your mobile www.jmts-fastlink.com

GSAT

Fastlink
Jordan Mobile Telephone Services

Jordan Times

An independent Arab print daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1973.
 جوردن تايمز مؤسسة صحفية مستقلة تصدر باللغة الإنجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية

Chairman of the Board of Directors:
 MAHMOUD AL KAYED

Director General:
 MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:
 GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
 Jordan Press Foundation,
 University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.
 Telephone: 684311, 699634, 667171, 603585
 Facsimile: 696183
 E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo
 Web Sites: http://accessme.com/JordanTimes/

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

Do not abuse our hospitality

THE SLAYING of eight people at an Iraqi businessman's home on Saturday night, including an Iraqi diplomat and his wife, beyond its viciousness and sadness is cause for grave concern. Amman cannot and must not be turned into a theatre for rivalries and a killing ground for any group, whether Iraqi or otherwise. When Jordan chose to keep its borders open with Iraq and welcomed our Iraqi brethren to live and work here it did so for the sake of the 18 million or so individuals who have suffered and continue to suffer under the U.N.-imposed sanctions. No matter whether it is Iraqi officials or businessmen who live in and do business through the Kingdom, Jordanians will not tolerate any misuse of their hospitality and sympathy.

While we have to wait for the results of the investigation into Saturday night's atrocious crime and hope that it has no political motive, we cannot but be disturbed more by the professional manner in which it was carried out. Meanwhile this latest inhuman act and the attempt earlier this month on the life of the Iraqi commercial attaché can only tell us one thing: that the sanctions have had untold effects not just on the material well-being of the Iraqi people but also on their psychology and morale. For an official or a son or a business partner to become involved in conspiring to kill their colleagues or relatives or friends speaks volumes about the state of affairs in which the Iraqis, inside their country and abroad, have found themselves. Such materially and morally corrupting sanctions must therefore be brought to an end and justice to all be served.

We have trust and confidence that our security authorities will spare no effort and leave no stone unturned in a bid to find out who was behind the ugly crime at Al Rabia. The heinous act's perpetrators will ultimately be apprehended and brought to justice, we are sure. Until then, the circumstances surrounding the multiple killings and their aim will remain a puzzle that should be solved.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

IT IS gratifying to see the U.S. administration recognising Jordan's relentless endeavours to reform its economy and its commitment to the peace process, but the Kingdom requires practical steps and more aid so that it can ensure sustainable development and remain dedicated to the cause of lasting peace, according to an editorial in Al Aswaq daily Sunday. The paper said that the \$225 million allocated in the U.S. 1999 fiscal budget in aid to Jordan is very little compared to the task it has been shouldering and the sacrifices it has made with the hope of achieving a lasting peace in the Middle East. In order that Jordan can become attractive to the investors it should be helped through greater amounts of aid to finance its infrastructure and other basic projects, said the paper. Rescheduling of Jordan's debts to the outside world, offering the Kingdom more financial help and opening the door for Jordan to market its products in Europe and the U.S. are requirements that can ensure further stability in the region, said the paper. It is hoped, added the paper, that the U.S. and Europe would translate their recognition of Jordan's pivotal role in this region into greater amounts of aid and so contribute more practically towards ensuring the region's security and stability.

OREIB RINTAWI, a writer for Al Doustour, drew a comparison between the situations in Turkey following the banning of the Welfare Islamic party and Algeria which denied the Islamic Salvation Party the right to rule. In both Turkey and Algeria the Islamists won popular support through democratic means but both parties have been deprived the chance to attain their aspirations, noted the writer. The Islamists in Turkey and Algeria in fact received most of the votes in the parliamentary elections but the military institutions in both countries seem to be determined to counter any moves by the Islamists to assume power, he added. In both countries the political developments have manifested the fragility of democracy and stripped the regimes of all credibility, according to the writer. But the main question remains now whether the Islamists in Turkey will follow in the footsteps of the Islamists in Algeria and go underground and whether the Islamists of Turkey will join the Kurds in a violent struggle against the military to achieve their objectives.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Towards a strategy for reducing unemployment and poverty

UNEMPLOYMENT HAS become an issue of concern for countries at all levels of development. Nearly one billion people (about 30 per cent of the entire global labour force) are out of work with unemployment exceeding 10 per cent in most regions of the world. Such rates threaten regional and global stability. The director general of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) could not have been more accurate when he said that the "Current levels of unemployment make no economic sense and are neither politically nor economically sustainable."

According to an ILO report, the reasons for such global unemployment figures are numerous. They include: Low growth rates in industrialised countries since 1973; failure in most developing economies to recover fully from the economic crisis of the early 1980s; slow adjustment of wages to declining labour productivity; the emergence of wage inflation which lasted until the mid-1980s; the growth of long-term unemployment; and the increasing apathy by millions of workers.

For the developed countries, the rise of imports from low-wage countries has caused several problems. The loss of manufacturing jobs, especially in labour-intensive industries, has increased. Existing disparities between the incomes of the high skilled and the low-skilled have widened as labour-intensive jobs were drawn to the low-wage countries thus decreasing the demand in high-wage countries for low-skilled labour. Furthermore, the outflow of investment from the developed countries to the developing increased as producers were lured to the less developed by the lower costs there — this argument may not hold true in many cases where investors prefer high-tech, capital abundant markets.

In developing countries, the causes for unemployment include high rates of growth in the labour force. On average, the rate of growth of the labour force in developing countries has been 2 per cent per annum. This rate, given a 6 per cent rate of inflation, places a tremendous pressure on the developing economies to grow at rates that exceed 8 per cent in order to fully compensate for the increase in labour and prices. Alas, Jordan is not an exception.

The 1997 unemployment rate in Jordan, as stated in the recent budget speech of the finance minister, was 15.1 per cent. To compound Jordan's

problem the labour force grows at 5 per cent per annum — one of the highest growth rates in the world. Given an inflation rate of 3 per cent last year, the economy must grow at close to 8 per cent in order for the unemployment rate not to increase. And since the Jordanian market is small in size, its growth must be export-led, particularly in the industrial sector. In other words, Jordan must wholeheartedly pursue export-creation and, because the present investment level of 33 per cent of the GDP is not sufficient to achieve a growth rate of greater than 8 per cent, the inflow of investment, both foreign and domestic, must be encouraged.

However, for Jordan to achieve such an economic growth rate, which by-the-way exceeds the growth rate of last year by almost 3 percentage points, there must be a

problem is that the banking sector may not respond swiftly enough to the needs of new producers for investment funds and working capital, especially those of small and medium enterprises. Also, there may be bottlenecks in infrastructure such as power generation and roads and highways or shortages in skilled labour and regional disparities in distribution. The full application of the aptly named Social Productivity Programme (SPP) should help ensure that short run pains are reduced without sacrificing the long-term gains.

As for poverty (22 per cent of the population is presently below the poverty line), the government must create a reform strategy that improves the method of delivery of social benefits, and makes the unemployment benefit system more friendly to implement. Furthermore, the tax system must be reformed to alleviate the problems of the "working poor" — a good percentage of Jordan's poor employed at below subsistence. Both the SPP and the most current changes in the tax system toward penalising consumption should work in favour of Jordan's reform strategy.

However, market reform may not be sufficient for reducing poverty and income

"The capacity of the poor has to be strengthened through the provision of rural infrastructure, credit schemes and improved access to education and health services, particularly outside the rural sector"

strong social consensus on the government strategy. This is best accomplished through the creation of an institutional link between the private and public sectors. Sporadic, non-transparent, and random acts of disclosure leave room for witch doctors and witch-hunts that nobody wants or needs, thereby ultimately derailing the drive for growth. Thus, Jordan must continue its present economic reform programme which is based on market stabilisation, removal of market distortions, and market liberalisation.

However, the primary problem with economic reform — markedly market liberalisation — is that job destruction in uncompetitive jobs occurs rapidly while job creation in newly competitive activities is usually slower paced. Alternatively stated, the incidence of jobs lost is faster than that of the jobs created through trade. Therefore, market reform creates a serious problem: A rise in transitional unemployment, which necessitates a significant government investment. Why? Because capital stock (investment) is usually fixed in the short run and hence job creation even in the most ideal circumstances comes after a time lag.

inequality simply because the poor, who are typically assetless, uneducated, and without access to credit, will not be able to respond fast enough to the new opportunities created by the market reform, thereby significantly weakening the effect of a trickle-down solution. Therefore, the capacity of the poor has to be strengthened through the provision of rural infrastructure, credit schemes and improved access to education and health services, particularly outside the rural sector. These are areas that are fully addressed by the SPP, in particular through the microfinance and infrastructure components.

Overall, Jordan may be on the right track in combating unemployment and poverty. Both the economic stabilisation and market reform programme and the SPP tend to complement each other. Increasing the growth rate beyond what has been achieved already must become a necessity that is on the mind of each consumer and producer. The battle for Jordan must be relentless and long-term. If it took us at least three decades to get to where we are, a few years to get to where we want to be may be necessary.

Netanyahu ratchets up violence threat

By Ray Hanania

AS THE Middle East "peace process" disintegrates, the threat of violence continues to increase.

Caught between unfulfilled promises from the Israelis and misled both by American Jewish leaders and Israel's Labour Party, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat faces the difficult task of trying to equalise his weight in the peace process against the weight of the government of headline extremist Benjamin Netanyahu.

Arafat had walked into the peace process willingly, having been promised by the left-leaning Labour Party and the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, that a "fair" peace agreement could be reached that addressed two goals: Israel's security needs and claims on land based on military conquest; and, the Palestinian need for a homeland in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Both sides recognised from the beginning that the process would be long, hard and would include several topics that were simply unresolvable such as the future status of Jerusalem.

Despite these obstacles, Rabin and Arafat agreed that it was in the best interests of their own people to proceed on this shaky road than to allow the status quo with its festering open wounds to continue to be exploited by extremists on

both sides whose only goal is the total destruction of the other.

Rabin and Arafat recognised that the alternative to peace was the real threat of a new war, or worse and more likely, a prolonged war of violence and counter-violence that would plunge the two peoples into a downward cycle of destruction and take more Jewish and Arab lives.

Today, with Rabin murdered at the hands of right-wingers and an unrepentant settler fanatic, and the Labour government replaced by Netanyahu's headline coalition of "rejectionists," the prospects for peace continue to dim.

The likelihood of increasing violence is great, and only a matter of time.

This pessimism is reflected by Arafat, who was presented with Netanyahu's idea of a fair deal: "You guarantee that Israel live in total peace in what amounts to 80 per cent of the disputed land of the former British mandated Palestine, and the Palestinians accept the remaining 20 per cent as a bantustan where you can conduct minor activities of semi-independence."

Obviously, Netanyahu's concept of a fair negotiation is to set pre-conditions that remove from the table the majority of what Israel demands, and only allow compromise and even discussion those small issues Israel is willing to concede. Netanyahu finds himself

in circumstances far different from one of his mentors, former Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

Claiming to genuinely desire a "real peace," Begin lied to the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat falsely promising that peace between Israel and Egypt would one day lead to peace between Israel and all of the other Arab peoples, including the Palestinians.

When the Egyptian-Israeli peace accords were signed, Begin simply stopped all discussion on other issues of concern to the rest of the Arab World. Begin had achieved his primary goal: By removing Egypt from its Arab alliances, he virtually made it impossible for the Arabs to launch another real war against Israel. With Egypt gone, Israel easily ignored the Syrian regime and began pressuring the more moderate government of Jordan.

Netanyahu's strategy was to seek the same goal. But even with a peace accord signed with Jordan, and with Netanyahu taking on Begin's headline stand, little has changed from the confusion that the Begin-Sadat peace accords left the Middle East.

The Arabs cannot launch a conventional war as they did in 1973, but the threat of violence is now even greater from the growing ranks of extremists among both the Israelis and the Arabs.

What Netanyahu ignores out of sheer disregard for

the security of the entire region, is that violence perpetrated by individual groups outside of the peace process (including his own supporters in the fanatic Israeli settler movement) is not linked to the dynamics of regional Arab politics.

The threat of increased violence is directly contingent on the actions of Israel. By reaching a genuine peace with the Palestinians, the Israelis can remove the Palestine Question from the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and pull the rug out, albeit slowly, from under the extremists who seek to use violence to prevent a genuine peace.

But by seeking a disingenuous peace, as he is now doing with Arafat, Netanyahu is setting the stage for a Middle East that will someday be dominated by rigidly fanatic Jewish and Arab terrorists who, using religion as a foundation, will eventually destroy Israel and all hopes for a democratic, non-sectarian Palestine state.

The manner of this destruction is not obvious to the people in the region.

But when it does become clear, it will probably be far too late to stop.

Ray Hanania is a Palestinian Arab American journalist and author. His columns are archived on the Internet at www.hanania.com.

Human Rights File Where Turkey's Constitutional Court may have fumbled

By Waleed M. Sadi

TURKEY'S CONSTITUTIONAL Court decision to ban the Islamist Welfare Party raises interesting questions for human rights jurisprudence. For starters, it is now commonly understood that no country in this time and age is free to adopt laws and apply them without taking into full consideration international norms as codified in international treaties. The provisions of these human rights treaties have become part of the hard customary international law and therefore legally binding even on those states that have yet to ratify them.

For Ankara which is destined to play a pivotal role in the Middle East on more than one front and is seeking membership in the European Union (EU), it is obviously incumbent on it to be cognizant of two basic guidelines: First, the European human rights convention which prescribes the ground rules for all European nations on freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Second, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which in essence codified into legally binding provisions the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which is now considered as part of the soft customary international law.

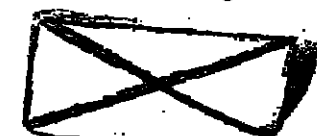
Unfortunately for Turkey and the cause of human rights worldwide, Ankara is not among the some 140 countries which have ratified or acceded to ICCPR. This Turkish reservation about adhering to this particular international covenant obviously gives ammunition to its enemies within Europe to block its membership in the EU. Worse still, this hesitation to yield to basic international human rights instruments undermines Ankara's quest for critical regional and international roles commensurate with its military, political and economic profiles would remain undermined by the unfinished business on human rights law. Friends of Turkey who appreciate and prize its many positive national attributes look to Ankara for leadership not only on the military, political and economic levels but also on the human rights and humanitarian fronts as well. The fact that Ankara has not yet acceded to ICCPR does not absolve its courts from applying its articles as part of the binding customary international law.

The latest judicial decision by the highest court of the country did a big disservice to Turkey's long-term interests insofar as the ban it ordered was extended to the entire party and not confined to its leader Necmettin Erbakan who had allegedly endorsed violent means to gain power for his party. It seems that the controversial verdict was adopted without full regard to international norms on human rights especially ICCPR. The rule of thumb under international human rights jurisprudence is that no nation can legislate against any political party or activity unless it advocates or resorts to force in the advancement of its cause or preaches and promotes racial, ethnic or religious discrimination or incitement. In this context Articles 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 of ICCPR are relevant. Article 18 stipulates that "everyone (including political parties)" shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching. These rights have been construed by the Committee of Human Rights as encompassing the right to wear Islamic dress. Article 19 states that "everyone (including political parties)" shall have the right to hold opinions without interference." Article 20 adds that "any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law." The Turkish court in this instance did not rest its judgement on any of these guidelines and this is where the court may have committed a major judicial error. Where the Turkish law appears to run counter to these principles, the court in question is duty bound to interpret the Turkish law in conformity with these articles of international law. Where this judicial improvisation is impossible, the organic law of the country needs to be amended accordingly.

The complexity of the recent decision against the Islamist Welfare Party and its leader Erbakan therefore stems from the possible conflict between international norms and the organic laws of the country which stipulate that any activity that runs counter to secularism is a taboo. Obviously the Constitutional Court has established that the Welfare Party's platform violates secularism. The issue, though, remains to be whether under international norms this legal rationale can stand in an international or European tribunal. Most probably the European Court of Human Rights would rule against Turkey in this instance should it accept to look into the case and exercise jurisdiction over it. There is no way that the European Convention on Human Rights or the Human Rights Committee charged with the mandate of monitoring the application of ICCPR would yield to the legal reasoning of the Constitutional Court of Turkey per se unless it finds that the Welfare Party's platform violates restrictions similar to those outlined in the aforementioned Article 20 of ICCPR.

On the other hand, Ankara may not feel bound by any such European or international verdict unless its interest in becoming a European nation supersedes its strict adherence to its own interpretation of the constitution and other laws of the land. Should Turkey regard its objective of becoming a member of the select European club a supreme, it is only natural that it should accept to be bound by its rules.

Turkey's profile on human rights law though improving all the time is still due for a fresh review and reconsideration. The country has steadily increased its membership in several human rights conventions, such as the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention Against Torture, the Slavery Convention of 1926, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol. All these conventions are highly important but short of ratifying ICCPR, Ankara's perspective on human rights law would remain short of the international target. Turkey should be in the forefront of countries whether in the Middle East or in Europe which sign and ratify the principal international human rights instruments. Unless Ankara opts to follow in the footsteps of so many states and become a state party to ICCPR, its courts may not feel obliged to apply its provisions on mere technical grounds. Had Turkey ratified the ICCPR, there would be no doubt that its highest court would have had to hand down a different judgement on the legality of the Welfare Party. The Constitutional Court could have nevertheless applied the law of ICCPR by interpreting the national constitution accordingly but it chose not to. The fallout from the recent court decision on the Welfare Party will no doubt spur closer scrutiny of Ankara's overall perspective on human rights law.



Prince Hassan calls on reporters to assume responsible professional role

(Continued from page 1)

journalists in order to help them improve their professional skills and deal with new developments in the field of communication.

He called for media organisations to cooperate in establishing a media training institute to train journalists and upgrade their skills.

The Prince also pointed to the rapid development in information technology and

its influence on the exchange of data in a world that is increasingly becoming a true global village. "Information is an important weapon that we should arm ourselves with in order to defend our causes and to build a better Jordan," he said.

"It would be a helpful source that would convey our message to the world [transferring us] from being importers of news to exporters," he said.

He also called for a working relationship between the newspapers and the Jordan News Agency, Petra. The agency, he said, could become a mixed entity with public and private ownership.

Prince Hassan also called for the establishment of an information centre "that would be a national reference point for newspapers and researchers to make use of."

Arafat threatens to restart intifada; U.S. asks PNA to crack down on terrorism

(Continued from page 1)

controlling terrorism."

Mr. Netanyahu, she added, must "look at what is possible in terms of the commitment made for the further redeployment, and then to move to permanent status talks" concerning the West Bank.

Ms. Albright also expressed disappointment at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's decision last week to effectively bar Mr. Arafat from paying it a visit (see story on page 12).

Mr. Arafat had planned to stop by the Washington museum during his stay in Washington.

"I think that's too bad," she said of the museum's decision. "We have many people say that it is important for Arafat to understand what was really a defining moment in Jewish history, which is the Holocaust."

For his part, Samuel Berger, Mr. Clinton's national security adviser, said the U.S. president would urge the two leaders "to get back into a serious

negotiation" and revive the moribund talks.

"It's very important now for the parties to make tough decisions, to get back to the table, to get into permanent status negotiations, which can revive the peace process and achieve a lasting peace," he said on CBS Television.

"There is not an unlimited amount of time here," he added. "This is time for tough decisions."

8, including Iraqi DCM, murdered in Al Rabbia

(Continued from page 1)

weeks. Rahim Taher, the Iraqi embassy's commercial attaché, escaped unharmed when an assailant opened fire on him. Authorities have implicated at least 11 Iraqis, including his mother-in-law in the attack they said was carried out due to family problems.

A judicial source who requested anonymity, told the Jordan Times that the attack occurred between 11:00 and 12:00 p.m. on Saturday night.

He said five of the eight, including Hajjo, 45, were found dead in various parts of the villa with their throats slit. All of them sustained stabs in their chest and stomach.

He added that Hajjo, with scars found on his wrists, appeared to have been the only victim to resist the attackers.

He said that eight to ten stabs were found on the body of the Iraqi diplomat while his wife received at least five.

Four of the bodies were found on the villa's first floor — including that of Mr. and Mrs. Hajjo. Two others were found on the second floor, while the Egyptian guards and a third body were found in the house's basement, the source said.

He said police arrived at the scene after the Greek woman, who was apparently George's girlfriend and was living with him, managed to reach the phone and call for help.

The judicial official said that the victims were forced to sit on a chair, where they were tied and stabbed at a later time.

"I have investigated many murders but this is the ugliest and most horrible crime I have ever seen in my life."

the source said.

"The way they tied their victims and slaughtered them proves that the killings were carried out by very professional murderers," he added.

"Our initial investigation revealed that the attackers spent at least 12 hours in the house before they committed their crime," the source said.

"We cannot rule out a political motive behind the attack but our primary investigations indicate that business differences may be behind the crime," the source said.

The official said that the files found at the residence of George shows that the Iraqi businessman has concluded business contracts worth millions of dollars in the past few weeks.

"He is a well-organised businessman. We found all the names and details of his contracts, debts and properties worldwide," the source said.

He said that Ms. Lidaki told interrogators before undergoing an operation at Al Bashir Hospital that the attackers stabbed the victims one after the other after tying their hands and legs while sitting on chairs.

The woman, placed under tight security, is recovering from chest and stomach wounds at the hospital, the source said.

She told investigators that the attackers took her by surprise as she entered the house on Saturday afternoon.

"They tied my legs with ropes and tapes and put me on a chair," Ms. Lidaki reportedly told the investigators before she was rushed to hospital.

"The testimony of the Greek woman will be crucial to identify those behind the

attack," the judicial source said.

The source said that police investigations have discovered that the victims were killed in a spree that lasted less than half an hour.

A security source, who asked not to be named, told the Jordan Times that Mr. Oufi, a relative of the well-known Iraqi millionaire Nazmi Oufi had business links with Jordanian partners.

The source said that George had been married to an Iraqi woman, whom he divorced in the past few years.

After the divorce, she left with her son Sahim to the United States but later on sent her son to live with his father, the source said.

A spokesman of the Iraqi foreign ministry, which broke the news after several hours, denounced the attacks and called for an immediate investigation into the "cowardly" killing.

"It was a disgusting massacre," a stunned Iraqi official told Agence France Presse in Baghdad.

"Even if it is too early to comment, we believe a third party may have had a hand in it," he said.

But another official here reproached the Jordanian authorities saying they "must provide the security to prevent the recurrence of such incidents."

The Iraqi government said that it will dispatch the foreign ministry undersecretary, Sa'ad Al Faisal, and a senior security official to follow up on the investigation.

Russian shoppers get choosier amid battle of brands

By Max Ognev
Agence France Presse

MOSCOW — Russian shoppers, who were forced to wait for hours in long queues to buy scarce and drearily packaged goods in Soviet times, are now dazzled by a glut of brightly coloured boxes and wrappers — both Western and Russian.

After market reforms were launched in 1992 Russians quickly had to get familiar with a host of Western brands competing fiercely to tickle their taste buds, but domestic manufacturers are now catching up fast.

"I was so surprised when I found that the yoghurt I had bought was produced in Russia," said Yelena Ivanovna, a pensioner. "The container is so colourful — we're not used to such beautiful packaging."

In the past two years

Russian food processing plants have poured money into brand development and packaging.

"They have realised that to make their products competitive in Russia, they now have to bring their brand marketing up to international standards," said Alexander Nikolayev, a manager at the Swedish packaging firm Tetra-Pak in Moscow.

Tetra-Pak, which specialises in packaging milk and fruit juice, is pioneering aseptic technology in the Russian market.

About 75 per cent of liquid food products are packed in aseptic materials in Western countries, but in Russia the figure is just two per cent, Nikolayev said.

Aseptic technology allows the producer to keep liquids fresh for months — a major advantage in Russia, where distributors have

to cope with enormous distances to reach consumers.

"We have been working here since 1993 and now cover more than 90 per cent of the market," said Nikolayev.

In 1997, Tetra-Pak supplied more than 1.5 billion packets to the Russian market, compared with 1.2 billion in 1996.

"In Russia, manufacturers have to transport products over very long distances, for example to the Far East. Often milk is transported through regions with different temperatures. So Tetra-Pak and other aseptic technology companies regard this market as extremely promising," Nikolayev said.

Tetra-Pak supplies its technology to 150 countries, and has invested in two packaging plants in Russia so far. But Russian companies are rapidly catching up with sophisticated Western

brands. "We had to be competitive to survive," said Vera Sedanova, a manager at the Lionozovsky dairy in Moscow.

"We are now focusing on developing new packaging designs as well as new products."

In 1997, the plant developed 10 new brands of yoghurt and a new pudding. "It was quite difficult for us, because just designing the packet's picture alone costs about \$4,500," she told AFP.

The plant signed a \$25 million contract with Omnia and Senoplast of Italy to install modern packaging technology.

"This year, we started to produce 125-gramme pots of fruit yoghurt, which are more convenient, but also unusual for Russia, where traditionally yoghurt has been sold only in 250-gramme containers," Sedanova said.

"Our new pots are aseptic, look like imported ones and the quality is even better by some parameters."

Many Russians prefer to buy domestic dairy produce, rather than imported brands.

"I always buy only Russian. I buy imported only if I want to try it," said Alefina Semyonovna, a pensioner.

"A few years ago we had no choice, because there were only Russian goods, and very few of them. But now we can choose not only between Russian and imported brands but also between various Russian brands."

Price is paramount for Alefina, who gets a pension of just 350 new rubles (\$57).

"I can afford 1.7 rubles for a yoghurt. I like them very much. Ten years ago I would never have dreamed of eating coconut or pineapple yoghurts," she said.

Jordan awaits implementation of Oslo accords, rejects Israel's security maps — Crown Prince

(Continued from page 1)

Ramon, that a Palestinian state will be established in Jordan, and the position of Labour leader Ehud Barak in this regard, the Crown Prince said the Labour leader was unequivocal in stressing Israel's commitment to respecting the sovereignty of Jordan and the peace treaty.

"Barak did not say anything that would indicate non-acceptance of the basis of the treaty which is based on respecting the sovereignty of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. There is no change in that position," the Crown Prince said.

He noted that neither Mr. Barak nor Mr. Sharon showed any deviation from their commitment to the treaty, which Jordan signed with the state of Israel, and not with a single political party.

Prince Hassan said that the clash of interests over resources and land that is being translated into maps pertains to the occupied territories and Israel and not to Jordan.

"The problem that remains unresolved is the capacity of the land in relation to water, social and topographic needs in light of the emigration to Israel of 600,000 to 700,000 Russian immigrants, the natural population growth and the limited resources," the Crown Prince said.

On the issue of Palestinian refugees, Crown

Prince Hassan reiterated Jordan's support for their right of return and/or compensation.

He said the refugees problem is an over-arching issue that involves four host countries in addition to the PNA.

Accordingly, no single country can solve the refugee problem individually, hence coordination of stands is needed between the host countries and the PNA.

"We say 'yes' for compensation and the right of return and to national unity, and no to settlement of refugees [in their host countries]," he said.

The word "normalisation" must be defined, he said, in answer to a question about Jordanian-Israeli relations, pointing

out the need for bridging the gap between ideology and pragmatism.

Jordan's trade relations with the Palestinians must be developed, he said, noting that Israeli exports to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip reach \$2.5 billion, while Jordanian exports to Palestinian areas does not exceed \$7 million annually.

Developing trade relations between the Palestinians and Jordan would decrease the dependence of the Palestinian economy on Israel and help consolidate the Palestinian identity, he emphasised, adding that Jordan's trade with the Arab World exceeds that of any other country in the region.

As for Jordan's decision to send an observer to the controversial Turkish-Israeli "search and rescue" exercises held in the Mediterranean Sea on January 5, Crown Prince Hassan said that Jordan needs to develop its limited naval capabilities in order to deal with possible crisis in the Gulf of Aqaba.

Saying that there have been similar exercises in the past in which some Arab countries participated, the Crown Prince questioned the motives behind the criticism launched against Jordan for its participation especially at this timing.

Israeli cabinet delays decision on troop pullback until after Washington talks

(Continued from page 1)

Radio. "This would reduce and not broaden the chances of reaching an agreement," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu said he wanted to tell Mr. Clinton "our limits and our flexibility" over the troop pullback. "We need to know if they are talking about one redeployment of two. Then I can return and we can make a decision," he said.

Israeli officials, meanwhile, expressed confidence Mr. Clinton would not press Mr. Netanyahu to change his hardline stance and come up with a pullback plan acceptable to the Palestinians.

"We are very reassured by the moderate tone taken by the Americans. They have no reason to pressure Israel. Nothing

dramatic is expected from the Washington meeting," Mr. Netanyahu's media adviser David Bar-Ilan told AFP.

The United States has said it wants Mr. Netanyahu to conduct a quick and "significant" troop withdrawal and to commit to a further withdrawal before mid-1998 in return for written Palestinian commitments to launch an offensive against anti-Israeli activists.

But Mr. Netanyahu plans to handover at most 12 per cent of the West Bank and only if the Palestinians agree to forgo the later withdrawal, Israel Radio said.

If the Palestinians refuse, the 12 per cent would be divided into the two phases, the radio said. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, who meets

Mr. Clinton on Thursday, called on the United States to put pressure on Mr. Netanyahu. But the White House admitted Friday that its expectations for the Washington talks "frankly, are not great."

"We are realistic about where we are at this moment and just know that we have to continue to try to press forward and continue to get the parties to focus on the choices they must make," spokesman Michael McCurry said Friday.

Israeli deputy defence minister, Silvan Shalom, said Sunday he was "happy to see the Americans have decided not to go to blows over this. We can't reach an arrangement when it's imposed on us. We need to reach it with agreement."

"Israel is ready to re-

deploy its troops in the West Bank and to enter accelerated negotiations on a final settlement with the Palestinians. We hope to go forward in the peace process if the Palestinians respect their commitments," Mr. Bar-Ilan said.

The cabinet has set a list of demands which it says the Palestinians must fulfil — most concerning a security crackdown — before any redeployment takes place.

Israeli critics and the Palestinians have dismissed the list as a ploy, accusing Mr. Netanyahu of setting unreasonable demands to prevent the pullback from ever taking place.

The Palestinians have rejected any cancellation of the later withdrawal and have insisted Israel must hand over 90 per

cent of the West Bank by mid-1998, citing details in 1995 self-rule accords.

Mr. Netanyahu will face a dry reception at the White House, stripped of protocol: an hour-long meeting with Mr. Clinton without the traditional press conference afterwards or the usual dinner with the U.S. president.

Mr. Arafat will receive the same treatment, prompting protests from Israel that the Israeli prime minister is being put on the same protocol level as the Palestinian president.

Cold-shouldered by Mr. Clinton, Mr. Netanyahu will also meet with the head of Mr. Clinton's opposition in Congress, Newt Gingrich, as well as Jewish and right-wing Christian leaders.

EU ministers due in Algeria today

(Continued from page 1)

native Spain.

"The troika visit is an very important step — it will permit the exploration of the possibility of new steps," he told the El Pais newspaper.

Prompting the trip is European shock at a new wave of massacres in which, according to press reports, more than 1,500 people have died since Dec.

30, when Ramadan began. The government's own toll is 254.

Well over 60,000 have died violently in Algeria — an important source of oil and gas for Europe — since the military in 1992 cancelled elections that the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was set to win.

Tunisian Foreign Minister Said Ben Mostefa arrived in Algiers on Saturday, bearing

ing a message for Algerian President Liamine Zeroual from Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali, Algerian Radio said.

Tunis — like many other Arab capitals — backs Algeria's policy in battling armed Islamist groups, six years after the military foiled an election victory by Islamists.

"This underlines again Tunisia's oft-stated solidarity with its Algerian brothers...

to save Algeria from the abyss that the followers of violence what to precipitate," the private Le Temps newspaper in Tunis said Sunday.

The EU envoys, due to remain in Algeria for 24 hours, are to meet Foreign Minister Ahmad Attaf and other government ministers as well as opposition legislators, newspaper editors and "other independent commentators."

No announcement has been made of a meeting with Mr. Zeroual, but a meeting with the Algerian defence minister is "possible but not yet confirmed," a British spokesman said Friday.

Neither is it clear if the EU officials will travel to any of the sites of recent massacres.

British Ambassador Francis Gordon on Thursday visited Sidi Hammed, out-

side Algiers, where the government says more than 100 civilians were massacred last week. U.S. Ambassador Cameron Hume visited the village Friday.

In an interview published Sunday, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said that Algeria should be helped to stop the war or Europe could face a flood of refugees from the former French colony.

"Whoever does not give

Algeria stability today will get back instability tomorrow in the form of massive refugee movements," he told the mass circulation Bild newspaper.

Rapid action "is in the interests of the Algerians but also in the interests of Europe, and above all Germany," often a prime target for refugees and asylum seekers entering Europe, he said. French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine told the

Al Hayat newspaper that the visit represents "real progress" in relations with Algeria, which insists its conflict is a strictly domestic issue.

"It means that they are admitting that a country can be sovereign and at the same time can hold dialogue and discussions," he told the London-based Arabic newspaper.

Arab economies rose on oil prices in '96, but could drop with them now

ABU DHABI (AFP) — High oil prices and reforms boosted the Arab economies collectively by more than eight per cent in 1996, according to a new report, but growth could slow this year if oil prices continue to drop.

The combined gross domestic product (GDP) of the Arab League's 22 members surged by around 8.4 per cent to \$576 billion in 1996 from \$531 billion in 1995, said the 1997 Arab Economic Report.

"The improvement in 1996 was due to high oil prices and ongoing economic reform programmes in several member states," said the annual report, prepared by the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund, the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, the Cairo-based Arab League Secretariat and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development in Kuwait.

Official figures indicate the economic upturn was likely to have been sustained during 1997.

But economists said that an expected decline in oil prices could slow the overall economy of the Arab League members in 1998, though their members carrying out restructuring programmes could continue to record high growth.

Gulf economists, citing official projections, said the GDP in the Arab Gulf states could slow down this year if oil prices maintained their current downward trend.

"This means two things: The oil sector will sharply decline and Gulf governments could revise down their spending estimates for the year. This will naturally lead to an overall downturn," an economic expert said.

Oil prices have dived by more than 15 per cent over the past month to reach nearly \$15.5, one of their lowest levels in four years.

The decline occurred although seasonal demand is at its annual peak and experts believe they could slide further in summer if the 11-nation Organisation of

Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) does not cut output.

The 1996 growth figures for Arab economies is far higher than the GDP rise of 5.9 per cent in 1995 and only 1.5 per cent in 1994, when oil prices plunged to one of their lowest levels.

The figures, carried by WAM, the official news agency of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), showed Morocco recorded the highest 1996 growth of 12 per cent because of a better harvest season, privatisations and other reform programmes.

High rates were also recorded in the Gulf oil heavyweights of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE, which benefited from an increase of nearly \$3.3 in oil prices that year.

With a crude production of around 12.2 million barrels per day in 1996, their economies grew by at least seven per cent while the oil sector jumped by more than 15 per cent. Almost equivalent rates were recorded in the Gulf

Cooperation Council (GCC) and other Arab states in 1997 as crude prices were as high as \$19 and reforms gained momentum among some members.

The Arab report did not include Iraq, whose economy has been in shambles because of crippling sanctions imposed by the United Nations following Baghdad's invasion of neighbouring Kuwait in August 1990.

Djibouti and war-torn Somalia were also not included in the report, the only authenticated economic data on the region.

Publication of the report is usually delayed by several months as some members are late in providing data about their economies while others do not supply any information.

The report about the economic, fiscal and social developments among the Arab League members showed inflation was cut to 6.2 in 1996 per cent from 9.5 per cent in 1995 although it remained out of control

in Sudan, Iraq and other members.

It estimated the Arab population at around 257 million at the end of 1996 and the total workforce at 78.6 million.

Meanwhile, the report also showed that a decline in the U.S. dollar against major currencies boosted the combined Arab debt by nearly \$6 billion at the end of 1995.

The foreign debt of the Arab League's 22 members totalled \$157.7 billion at the end of 1995 compared with \$151.1 billion at the end of 1994, the Cairo-based League said in its 1997 economic report.

"The combined Arab debt increased during 1994-1995 after a decline in the previous three years. Nearly half that increase resulted from the reassessment of some debts in non-dollar currencies after a drop in the dollar's rate."

The figures, carried by WAM, did not cover 1996 and 1997.

New borrowers include Qatar and Oman, which are engaged in multi-bil-

lion-dollar gas liquefaction projects. Saudi Arabia, the world's leading oil supplier, will also get a loan of around \$4.3 billion to finance the purchase of more than 60 aircraft for its national carrier.

The bulk of the Arab debt is owed to the West and the main debtors are Egypt, \$33 billion, Algeria \$29.8 billion, Morocco \$22 billion, Syria \$20.5 billion and Sudan \$17.7 billion.

The report said Arab debt servicing rose slightly to around \$12.8 billion in 1995 from \$12.5 billion in 1994.

This compares with \$16.5 billion in 1993, it added.

The report gave no figures for sanctions-hit Iraq, which is believed to be saddled with more than \$70 billion in military debt owed mostly to Russia. Iraq's main arms supplier before the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The report estimated total Arab aid at \$102.5 billion at the end of 1995.

Netanyahu accused of sacrificing employment for lower inflation

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was accused Sunday by both labour unions and business leaders of sacrificing jobs in a bid to reduce inflation in his economic austerity plans.

Association of Israeli Industrialists President Dan Proper and the head of Histadrut, Israel's largest labour union, Amir Peretz, made a rare joint call on Mr. Netanyahu to change his economic policies.

They said in a joint statement that they would present Mr. Netanyahu with an "emergency plan" to create jobs, encourage exports and increase infrastructure investment.

Their criticisms have focused on high interest rates imposed by the Bank of Israel, which brought inflation down to a 30-year low of seven per cent in 1997.

But at the same time, unemployment grew to 8.1

per cent, its highest level in three years, while economic growth fell to two per cent in 1997, half the rate the previous year.

Bank of Israel President Yankov Frenkel defended the bank's high rates. "The government has a unique opportunity now to reduce inflation rates to European levels," he said.

Finance Minister Yankov Neeman, who has led Mr. Netanyahu's charge to liberalise the Israeli economy, insisted Sunday "there is no connection between inflation and unemployment."

But his Deputy Finance Minister Shmuel Slavin resigned on Thursday, calling on his boss to moderate the central bank. "I would prefer to see a set mini-

mum for inflation and a set maximum for unemployment," he said.

Mr. Proper and Mr. Peretz warned that unless the central bank backs down from its current interest rate of six per cent, unemployment would cross the 10 per cent mark over the next year.

Chamber of Commerce President Dan Gilerman said the bank's "dogmatic position" on interest rates had cost the economy three percentage points in growth last year.

"If the government doesn't immediately change its policies we are in danger of falling into the same sort of crisis which is currently hitting the Asian Tigers," he said.

Israelis' standard of liv-

ing dipped slightly in 1997 for the first time in seven years, and recent polls show that 63 per cent of Israelis are pessimistic the government can pull the economy out of recession.

Protests against unemployment have increased in the past two months, most notably in poorer "development towns" where Mr. Netanyahu received wide support in his 1996 election campaign.

Mr. Netanyahu was booed by residents in December when he visited the southern town of Ofakim, one of his electoral strongholds, where violent protests broke out earlier over the town's 20 per cent unemployment rate, the highest in Israel.

Histadrut also led a mas-

sive five-day strike by 700,000 workers in December to protest Mr. Netanyahu's economic policies, which paralysed the country.

But commentators Sunday said financial policies were not the only reason behind the economic problems.

"There is a direct link between the economic slowdown, the rise in unemployment and the freeze in the peace process since Mr. Netanyahu came to office," Haaretz newspaper said in an editorial.

The head of Israel's biggest textile firm, Delta, said "uncertainty over the negotiations with the Palestinians has put the brakes on growth."

FURNISHED APARTMENT FOR RENT
Located between 4th & 5th Circles. Consists of 3 bedrooms, 2 living rooms, 2 verandas, nicely furnished with telephone, TV, video player and many many extras.
For more details, please call owner at 674286

FOR RENT
Unfurnished semi attached villa with three bedrooms (340 sq.m.). Nice location, behind C-Town.
Call Tel.: 642229 - 079/70050

Duty Unpaid Car For Sale
Hyundai Sonata 97 G.L.S. (white), leather upholstery, automatic gear, full options, 18,000km, excellent condition.
If interested call 5930745, 5930283

A.R. Abu Kalaf Co.
Announces sale on German made clothes, including dresses, coats, skirts, shirts, jacket.
Down Town - Cold Market
Tel.: 628274

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS
1 Rider's whip
5 Tear into strips
10 Signal sound
14 Salesman's wares
15 Single-family dwelling
16 Gymnast
17 Loser in '52 and '56
20 Susan of "The Partridge Family"
21 Eur. nation
22 Most extraordinary
23 Chooses
24 Insects
25 Sealed tubes
26 Mind
29 Crowd of whales
32 Mazda model
33 New York canal
34 Cornery film
35 Loser in '64
38 Come up short
39 Barks in comics
40 Came up
41 Shepette?
42 of Worms
43 Genetic copies
44 Typetace
45 Shopping center
46 Musical refrain
49 Spanish bull
50 Have
53 Loser in '68
56 Old
57 Make laugh
58 Chills
59 Acuf and Orison
60 Swiss call
61 Appropriate

DOWN
1 Dressed
2 Take the bus
3 Were it not that
4 Green sphere
5 Three to the wind
6 Emcees
7 Judges' follower

8 Direction from Pittsburgh to Baltimore
9 Ale greedily
10 Link
11 Otherwise
12 Problems for prima donnas
13 Breathe shallowly
18 Not out of bounds
19 Border
22 Highly unconventional
24 Dips water
25 Mosey along
27 Call call
28 Diagram a service
29 Rental farm in Scotland
30 Tubby plus
31 Challenges
33 White heron
34 Seasonal song
36 Principal support
37 Clobber

42 Silently humored
43 Mount, PA
44 Savage and friendly
45 Computer clicker
46 Scorch
47 Writer Victor

48 Toe the line
49 Dull sound
50 Killer whale
51 Half of a fortnight
52 West St. group
54 Med. care plan
55 Broadway success

Peanuts

SO THEY ALL GO OFF SHOPPING, AND I'M LEFT ALONE IN THE CAR..

THAT'S OKAY...I'LL JUST SIT HERE AND..

ALL RIGHT, GET THAT TRUCK OUT OF THE WAY! WHEN'D YOU LEARN TO DRIVE, IN A CEMETERY? SAME TO YOU, FELLA!!

BE THE CHAUFFEUR.

Andy Capp

WOULD YOU CARE TO HAVE SUPPER WITH ME TONIGHT, PET?

I'D BE DELIGHTED

GOOD GIRL, I'LL BE BACK AT CLOSING TIME -

WHEN YOU GET THE FISH AND CHIPS, PET, I WOULDN'T MIND A BIT OF COD!

Mutt'n' Jeff

WE'RE HAVING MOTHER FOR DINNER -- IT'S HER DELICIOUS HOMEMADE SOUP!

MY MOTHER-IN-LAW'S A GOOD COOK BUT SHE MAKES A BIG PRODUCTION AND THROWS HERSELF INTO IT -- I JUST DON'T LIKE MY MOTHER-IN-LAW!

WELL, JUST EAT THE NOODLES!

HOROSCOPE
FORECAST FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 1998
By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21-April 19) — Expect a conflict, either between you and your boss or you and the career you want. Your partner may argue with you over what to do next. If you can work it out, you'll be money ahead. Whatever you do, it should be finished by this evening. It's time to move on.

TAURUS: (April 20-May 20) — Pay extra attention to your career for the next month. There will be a test. It may not come today, but you'll probably get some hints today about what you'll be tested on. Somebody you find attractive is pushing you to try for the next level. Not to worry. Once you get there, you'll love it.

GEMINI: (May 21-June 21) — You'd like to call in sick today, but that's not a good idea. You have to take care of business. This may be hard to explain to a loved one who wants your full attention and wants it now. Do the best you can. You can bring home a little present tonight. It won't be the same, but it'll help.

CANCER: (June 22-July 22) — The next month will be a good time to learn how to budget, spend and invest, not only your own but also other people's money. Since these are areas you find fascinating, you'll enjoy this phase. You're nervous when dealing with money, especially if it's owed to someone. Watch your caffeine and get plenty of rest.

LEO: (July 23-August 22) — Conditions are easing up. After tonight, you'll have more time for play than you've had in a while. It's as if the cavalry were coming to your rescue. It could be a new partner, but it's probably your own attitude. You've been forced to learn to delegate. Make that the focus today. Give away as much of your job as possible.

VIRGO: (August 23-September 22) — You enjoy work. The problem is the kind of work you'll be doing for the next month or so. It's mostly technical. You'll have to learn something new, and that's difficult for you. You'd rather already know everything, so the next few weeks might be unsettling. If you relax, it'll be much easier.

LIBRA: (September 23-October 23) — This is a lucky day for you. As it starts, you'll have a few obstacles to contend with, but you'll notice that things are getting easier as the day wears on. If you've got any Gemini friends, hang out with them this evening. You'll all be luckiest if you're together.

SCORPIO: (October 24-November 21) — Today has some good parts, but it's got some complications as well. You've been learning new skills; now you want to put some of them to use at home. This is a good time to fix up your house. There might be somebody leaning on you to do that today, in fact. Have a great time anyway.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22-December 21) — Your friends not only give you lots of helpful advice, but they might even be willing to do some of the work that's on your list. This afternoon, you'll find it easier to learn technical material. Study computer programmes or science, or maybe fixing things. You're primed for these subjects right now.

CAPRICORN: (December 22-January 19) — Conditions are perfect for you to further your career, even though it's going to be difficult. That's because you'll have to do something you don't really want to do. Oh well. It's certainly not going to get any easier. Better go ahead and give it a try.

AQUARIUS: (January 20-February 18) — Get ready to start meeting interesting people and doing interesting things. The current conditions are bringing out that side of you, and everybody else, too. This morning could be difficult, however. Finish up old, lingering business. You're going to want to get started on a new project soon.

PISCES: (February 19-March 20) — This is a good time to invest money or buy something with another person. It's easier to figure out what's going on. Do it early in the morning. Later tonight, you'll be under a little more pressure. You'll be smart to have all the major decisions made before that happens.

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

Now that Christmas is over, what are you getting me for Valentine's Day?

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
by Horat Arnold and Arthur Armitage

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TEJEC
YAPOS
HUBERC
VEENAL

Print answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumble: ABIDE BISON SULTRY SQUIRM
Answer: What he ended up with when he struck off — A LIQUID ASSET

(Answers tomorrow)

Many villas and apartments for rent and sale furnished or unfurnished. Abound Real Estate
Tel.: 5920605-5920609
Fax: 5932605
Mobile: 079/30007

Daily Business Beat
 A review of news from the Arabic Press

Large companies contribute 70 per cent of revenue collected by Income Tax Department

**** OUT OF** about 700,000 registered taxpayers, only around 200,000 are committed to paying their income tax, sources at the Income Tax Department have revealed noting that the large number who avoid paying this tax are causing millions of dinars in losses to the state treasury. The sources and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) officials indicated that 75 per cent of the people evade submitting the self-declaration income statement, which was activated since 1996. Investigations show that 70 per cent of those who pay the income tax are actually the large companies and the remaining 30 per cent are individuals. "This rate is very small compared to other countries," officials say. According to UNDP estimates the Income Tax Department collected JD156 million in 1995 but the amount fell to JD100 million last year. According to Jürgen Lessner, the UNDP Resident Representative in Amman, the department can double its collection this year to JD200 million if it upgrades its executive structure. Noting that tax evasion is a worldwide phenomenon, Mr. Lessner attributed it to weakness in laws and regulations and loopholes that makes easy to escape tax payment. Another reason given by Mr. Lessner was the weakness of the institution responsible for tax collection. The UNDP chief in Amman described the Income Tax Department as qualified and efficient with its human capabilities but, he pointed out, "the computer systems at the department are old and need modernisation." Furthermore, he saw that the number of employees was insufficient to handle all the work assigned to the department. He emphasised that for the department to double its revenue it should modernise and install new computers, formulate a strategy and double the number of employees. Mr. Lessner said most Jordanians "pretend to forget" filling the self-declaration income form whereas other countries impose still penalties and high fines are imposed on those who delay declaring their incomes. Firas Gharaibeh, a UNDP staff member responsible for developing the Income Tax Department, said that if the large companies are excluded, most of the burden falls on those employees whose income is known because it is hard to specify the income of private sector businessmen. An employee working at the department said that although there are 1,000 employees at the department, they don't have the capability to "run after" taxpayers in addition to the fact that "tax awareness" does not exist and "sense of belonging" is weak (Al Aswaaq).

REUTERS **REUTERS**
 The Business of Information

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- 1 Rider's whip
- 5 Tear into strips
- 10 Signal sound
- 14 Salesman's wares
- 15 Single-family dwelling
- 16 Gymnast Korbut
- 17 Loser in '52 and '56
- 20 Susan of 'The Partridge Family'
- 21 Eur. nation
- 22 Most extraordinary
- 23 Chooses
- 24 Insects
- 25 Sealed tubes
- 26 Mind
- 29 Crowd of whales
- 32 Mazda model
- 33 New York canal
- 34 Connelly film
- 35 Loser in '64
- 38 Come up short
- 39 Barks in comics
- 40 Came up
- 41 Sheepette?
- 42 ___ of Worms
- 43 Genetic copies
- 44 Typeface
- 45 Shopping center
- 46 Musical refrain
- 49 Spanish bull
- 50 Have
- 53 Loser in '68
- 56 Old
- 57 Make laugh
- 58 Chills
- 59 Accut and Orblon
- 60 Swiss call
- 61 Appropriate

DOWN

- 1 Dressed
- 2 Take the bus
- 3 Were it not that
- 4 Green sphere
- 5 Three ___ to the wind
- 6 Emcees
- 7 Judges' follower
- 8 Direction from Pittsburgh to Baltimore
- 9 Ate greedily
- 10 Links
- 11 Otherwise
- 12 Problems for prima donnas
- 13 Breathe shallowly
- 18 Not out-of-bounds
- 19 Border
- 23 Highly unconventional
- 24 Dips water
- 25 Moovy along
- 26 Cat call
- 27 Diagram a sentence
- 28 Rental farm in Scotland
- 29 Decade
- 30 Tubby plus
- 31 Challenges
- 33 White heron
- 34 Seasonal song
- 36 Principal support
- 37 Clobber
- 42 Silently ill-humored
- 43 Mount ___ PA
- 44 Savage and Friendly
- 45 Computer clicker
- 46 Scorch
- 47 Writer Victor
- 48 Toe the line
- 49 Dull sound
- 50 Killer whale
- 51 Half of a fortnight
- 52 Wall St. group
- 54 Med. care plan
- 55 Broadway success

Saturday's Puzzle solved.

ACROSS

- 1 RAN
- 2 KLED
- 3 SKEETER
- 4 IRONAGE
- 5 HELLENE
- 6 BIFOCAL
- 7 ANIMALS
- 8 COATED
- 9 ADV
- 10 ERAT
- 11 ASU
- 12 FLOW
- 13 RICA
- 14 GOLDIEHAWN
- 15 SEER
- 16 ESTRADA
- 17 STE
- 18 RST
- 19 EGG
- 20 URN
- 21 ATV
- 22 OAF
- 23 ADRIADNE
- 24 LIED
- 25 RINGING
- 26 GOUT
- 27 METE
- 28 DRNO
- 29 MAA
- 30 APES
- 31 EEE
- 32 ROBIN
- 33 NORIEGA
- 34 PALANCE
- 35 ALASKAN
- 36 ALLEGER
- 37 CONTEST
- 38 TEAROSE

DOWN

- 1 RAN
- 2 KLED
- 3 SKEETER
- 4 IRONAGE
- 5 HELLENE
- 6 BIFOCAL
- 7 ANIMALS
- 8 COATED
- 9 ADV
- 10 ERAT
- 11 ASU
- 12 FLOW
- 13 RICA
- 14 GOLDIEHAWN
- 15 SEER
- 16 ESTRADA
- 17 STE
- 18 RST
- 19 EGG
- 20 URN
- 21 ATV
- 22 OAF
- 23 ADRIADNE
- 24 LIED
- 25 RINGING
- 26 GOUT
- 27 METE
- 28 DRNO
- 29 MAA
- 30 APES
- 31 EEE
- 32 ROBIN
- 33 NORIEGA
- 34 PALANCE
- 35 ALASKAN
- 36 ALLEGER
- 37 CONTEST
- 38 TEAROSE

Brokers give pessimistic view of situation at stock exchange

By Abdul Salam Gharaibeh
 Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Dealers at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) cast a pessimistic view at the market's performance, noting that scarce liquidity and lack of will to invest have characterised the market's performance. According to Jamal Al Amad, deputy manager of the United Company for Investments, "investors do not exist and foreign investment funds have shown poor interest." "What affects the financial market these days is a state of uncertainty among the dealers who predict that the results of Jordanian industrial companies in the past year would be very poor," said Mr. Amad. He said that only when real changes in the political scene occur, especially with regard to the Iraqi market which absorbs most of the Jordanian exports, will there be very positive effect on the Jordanian economic situation and, subsequently, on the performance of the financial market. Mr. Amad said: "A large portion of foreign investments is awaiting to see a clearer vision of the political situation in the Middle East before deciding on entering the Amman Financial Market," according to Mr. Amad. Another Dealer, Mahmoud Daghamash, said "foreign investors visit the financial market from time to time to study the situation but they never come back due to complications in Jordan's laws and regulations."

Fiat increases world sales by 17.6 per cent in 1997

PARIS (AFP) — Fiat Auto increased its world sales by 17.6 per cent to 2,772 million vehicles in 1997 but was still unable to meet demand, marketing director Loic Caperan said on Friday. Sales were boosted by a scheme by the Italian government to subsidise the replacement of scrapped cars with new vehicles and also by strong performances in Brazil, Argentina, Poland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Fiat had on occasions been short of vehicles to supply dealers in Germany, France and Spain in order to satisfy domestic demand, Mr. Caperan told a press conference. Fiat's share of the West European market for cars rose from 11.2 per cent in 1996 to nearly 12.0 per cent last year but penetration of the European market outside Italy had declined to 5.1 per cent from 6.1 per cent but was expected to rise to 5.7 per cent this year. He forecast that the European market for cars this year would total 13.2 million from 13.4 million last year owing to an expected slowing of sales in Italy. The subsidy scheme was to be phased out and the Italian market would decline slightly to 2.2 million from 2.412 million in 1997. He forecast that the German market would increase to 3.48 million from 3.42 million. The director general for France Jean-Pierre Vaillant said he intended to win back market share to take 7.5 per cent of an expected market of 1.9 million cars this year from a share of 6.7 per cent last year. In 1996 Fiat had held 8.2 per cent of the French market owing mainly to sales of its small cars and a governmental scrap subsidy scheme. Fiat owns the names of Fiat, Lancia and Alfa Romeo. In 1997 in Western Europe it had sold 1.28 million vehicles under the name of Fiat from 1.14 million in 1996, 177,000 under Lancia from 159,000 and 129,000 under Alfa Romeo from 118,000. In Brazil, the second-biggest market for Fiat after Italy, the company had sold 496,000 vehicles last year from 443,000 in 1996, and in Poland, the fourth-biggest market, it had sold 172,000 vehicles from 165,000. Fiat intended to sell three million cars throughout the world in 2000, and to achieve a quarter of these sales in Italy, a quarter in the rest of west Europe, a quarter in South America and a quarter in the rest of the world.

Prices of popular hommos and fool may be raised

By Ahmad Al Khatib
 Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government may consider raising the prices of popular fool and hommos eateries because restaurants are making massive profits, officials said Sunday. Hundreds of such restaurants, which offer the popular fool (brown beans) and hommos (crushed chick peas) dishes topped with olive oil, want the government to allow them to raise their prices. But a recent study conducted by the National Society for Consumer Protection (NSCP) has showed that the restaurants were making over 100 per cent profits from selling these popular meals, loved by both the rich and the poor. The cost of one kilogramme of processed fool that makes up 22 dishes, stood at JD2.200. Restaurants are selling it for an average of JD5.500 — making a net profit of JD3.300. One kilogramme of processed hommos cost JD2.645 and is selling for JD 5.500 — the total price for 22 such dishes. "Our study has totally refuted claims that were used by the Union of Owners of Restaurants and Confectioneries which are demanding to raise their prices," NSCP director general Mohammad Obaidat told the Jordan Times. "If prices are raised, I advise citizens to prepare their own fool and hommos dishes at home," he said. "At least they can guarantee quality, better taste and cleanliness," Dr. Obaidat said. "Over and above, it is cheaper that way." The study has relied on two figures — the actual prices of each kilogramme of the two commodities and field information gathered on average prices of sale in the last three months. A kilogramme of raw hommos costs 500 fils while fool costs 530 fils. The average price of a dish of either commodities is around 250 fils. However, restaurants have rejected the NSCP claims saying they were hardly breaking even. "This cannot be true, we hardly gain 20 per cent of profits," Sheikh Deeb of Canary chain told the Jordan Times. "Usually they forget that to prepare a processed fool and hommos you need several materials that cost us a lot," he said. "We do not want that high percentage mentioned in the study, let them give us just 20 per cent and we are satisfied," he added.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET										
MOHARRAM BANK CENTRAL AMMAN - JERUSALEM										
TELEPHONE: 507171 / 507172										
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 18/01/1998										
PART	12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
BANK SECTOR										
146.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	14.8	1.25	13	380	122205	322.50	321.00	1.50
N 2.340	1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	1	250	450	1.81	1.80	0.01
N 3.340	1.840	BANK OF JORDAN	4.7	0.00	6	1474	8208	1.54	1.50	0.04
N 1.300	1.890	MID. EAST INV. BK.	46.3	0.00	7	2750	2802	1.02	1.01	0.01
S 2.680	1.650	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.4	6.03	2	137	236	1.75	1.73	0.02
S 5.300	4.610	THE HOUSING BK.	15.5	3.75	1	200	1036	5.20	5.18	0.02
S 4.180	1.850	JOR. INVEST. BANK	10.7	0.00	2	330	659	2.01	2.00	0.01
S 4.050	2.250	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.2	4.00	11	1795	4291	2.38	2.40	0.02
S 1.750	1.870	BEIT AL-MAL (BEITKA)	6	16.85	2	750	663	0.87	0.89	0.02
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 229.30 %CHG: -0.46 45 12066 140548										
2.100	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.8	7.35	1	300	612	2.04	2.04	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 121.06 %CHG: 0.00 1 300 612										
2.050	1.580	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.4	5.15	5	1215	2357	2.94	1.94	-
1.550	1.930	BATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	4	1000	1030	1.03	1.03	-
1.450	1.410	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	23.1	0.00	3	1000	450	0.45	0.45	-
1.590	1.150	MID. EAST HOTELS	14.0	0.00	1	1000	1300	1.20	1.20	-
4.000	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.4	0.00	20	6900	27519	4.00	4.00	-
1.090	1.900	BANKA EDUCATION	8	0.00	6	2500	2355	0.95	0.94	0.01
2.170	1.630	UNITED CO.	8.2	6.40	3	900	1554	1.69	1.72	0.03
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 117.31 %CHG: +0.06 42 14515 36454										
4.450	2.750	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.2	3.67	19	3168	9430	2.98	3.00	0.02
4.700	3.440	ARAB PHARM. IND.	11.8	4.68	5	3100	13213	4.28	4.27	0.01
8.540	5.000	JOR. CHEN. INDUS.	24.7	3.72	2	150	1211	8.50	8.07	0.43
6.000	4.400	DAN ALDAMA. DV. INV.	14.0	4.38	2	7250	41320	5.70	5.70	-
1.320	1.440	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	2	1000	460	0.46	0.46	-
1.140	1.370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEN.	9	0.00	15	9950	4378	0.45	0.44	0.01
2.780	1.380	UNIV. CHEN. INDUS.	15.1	5.99	1	50	84	1.76	1.67	0.09
1.820	1.150	JOR. SULPH. CHEN.	9	0.00	1	200	118	0.59	0.59	-
1.810	1.820	ARAB PHARM. CHEN.	15.1	5.93	1	500	590	1.18	1.18	-
1.410	1.690	UNIV. CHEN. INDUS.	15.1	5.93	14	3322	2879	0.86	0.86	0.00
1.420	1.380	BATL. PORTFOLIO	13.9	4.76	1	4000	5880	1.46	1.47	0.01
1.960	1.810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	14.5	0.00	6	2200	1980	0.90	0.90	-
1.970	1.340	EL - KAY READY WEAR	49.3	0.00	1	300	420	1.42	1.40	0.02
1.300	1.080	INTL. TORACO	6.6	0.00	4	3000	3600	1.21	1.20	0.01
1.200	1.840	ORION CH. & VEG.	45.5	0.00	2	1500	1500	1.01	1.00	0.01
1.110	1.000	JORDAN STEEL	32.6	6.84	5	2600	1872	0.72	0.72	-
1.840	1.570	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	23	39100	24006	0.62	0.62	-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 111.86 %CHG: +0.07 105 81976 113373										
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 166.05 %CHG: -0.23 193 108557 290987										
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 18/01/1998										
N 1.000	1.000	JOR. INTL. INSURANCE CO.	8	0.00	1	5000	5000	1.00	1.00	-
N 1.610	1.340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	10.1	0.00	1	500	190	0.38	0.38	-
N 1.650	1.640	DEARBANK	0.00	0.00	2	1500	315	0.71	0.71	-
N 1.570	1.360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	53	112800	60576	0.54	0.52	0.02
N 2.220	1.050	CHARTERED INV. GROUP	8	0.00	1	250	513	1.95	2.05	0.10
N 1.750	1.380	ARAB FOUN. & MED.	6	0.00	1	230	379	0.86	0.86	-
N 1.520	1.400	ARAB ELECT. INDUS.	9	0.00	1	1500	5895	0.46	0.45	0.01
N 1.440	1.580	MID. EAST PHARM. 901	9	0.00	4	9400	5074	0.64	0.64	-
N 1.730	1.550	BATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	6	9418	6568	0.68	0.70	0.02
N 1.470	1.340	INDUS. ENG.	9	0.00	4	16100	4247	0.28	0.27	0.01
N 1.980	1.770	INDUS. CHEN. INDUS.	15.2	0.00	2	650	377	0.86	0.86	-
N 1.980	1.690	ARAB CHEN. INDUS.	15.2	0.00	2	650	377	0.86	0.86	-
N 1.950	1.850	OPTICALS HANING 751	94.6	0.00	1	50	28	0.85	0.81	0.04
N 1.000	1.640	INT. ALUMINIUM 751	94.6	0.00	3	7300	2139	0.68	0.68	-
N 1.110	1.000	WUTRAN	2	0.00	3	1300	1287	1.20	1.17	0.03
N 1.000	1.900	SEKAL PRINT CO. 751	8	0.00	19	103700	62220	0.90	0.85	0.05
GRAND TOTAL 113 283018 156469										
* : New 12 months low										
S : Stock divided during the past 12 months										
N : Listed during the past 12 months										
P/E ratio is 100 or more										
+ : Negative %										
- : Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year										

JORDAN MARKETPLACE * JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE**

DAJANI Jewellers. Gems of the world 18-21 & 22 k. Gold.
 IN JORDAN - EGYPT & BRAZIL
 Amman, Amra Forum Hotel Shops 6th Circle.

STUDIO HAIG
 Professional quality in 1 hour service
 Develop your colour film at our shop and get:
 * JUMBO photo size 30% larger.
 * Free enlargement 20 x 30 cm.
 Shmeisani - Opposite Grindlays Bank.
 Phone: 604042
 Sweifteh Tel: 823691

CROWN HOTEL
 INDOOR HEATED SWIMMING POOL
 SAUNA, JACUZZI & MASSAGE
 FITNESS ROOM
 TENNIS & SQUASH COURTS
 Tel: 758180
 Radio & TV station RD.

FOR RENT
 Apartments & Villas Deluxe in Amman
SANABEL Real Estate
 Sweifteh
 Hajarat Complex
 Tel: 864230 - 865167

Crystal
 Quality Serviced Suites
 * One & Two Bedrooms * Fully Equipped Kitchens * Daily & Long Stay * Reasonable Rates
 5th Circle
 Tel: 692672 Fax 674551

Bani Hamida
 "MERRY CHRISTMAS"
 * New * New * New
 Makawir line on display at the Bani Hamida House
 * Rugs * Cushions * Wallhangings
 Attractive offers
 Location: Jabal Amman, 1st Circle, Rainbow St.
 Open daily from 8:00 till 8:00 including Fridays & official holidays.
 Tel: 658696/7

everything's Just Right
 The Place
 The Price
 The Goods
 Open From 8:30-5:00
 6:00-9:00
GRAND MARKET
 814630

Abdoun Real Estate
 Many villas and apartments for rent and sale furnished or unfurnished
 TEL: 5920605-5920609
 FAX: 5932605
 MOBILE: 079/30007

WEARING BALLY SUNGLASSES MADE HERE THE
 Now arrange the glasses to form the perfect shape by the expert optician.

ABIDE BISON SUTRY
 What he ended up with when he lost it.

World Swimming Championships

Australia win 3 golds on final night

PERTH (AFP) — Australian 17-year-old Grant Hackett ploughed through the pool in the third fastest time in history to waltz away with the 1500 metres freestyle final at the world swimming championships here on Sunday — just one of three golds that the host nation claimed on the final night of competition.

Hackett's time of 14 minutes 51.70 seconds has only been bettered by world record holder Kieren Perkins and German Jorg Hoffmann.

The young Australian raced perfectly out in front for the entire 30 laps to thwart all attempts by Italy's European champion Emiliano Brembilla and Australian teammate and Atlanta Olympic silver medalist Daniel Kowalski to swim him down.

Hackett became the eighth swimmer to swim a sub-15 minute 1500m.

"I know I'm the third fastest man in history, but it would have been nice to go under 14.50 and be the second fastest man in history," said Hackett.

"I still feel like I have heaps left in my tank and I'm absolutely buzzing."

"I was focusing the whole way through on my stroke and my turns which were most important and I knew if I touched the wall first at every lap no-one was going to beat me to the world title."

Kowalski said of his young teammate's achievement: "He swam awesome, but I wish he would have got Jorg Hoffman's championship record (14:50.36)."

The inspirational home crowd erupted when the Australian team of Matt Welsh, Phil Rogers, Michael Klim and Chris Fydlar beat the United States in the 100m medley relay final.

In a stirring last lap, Fydlar held on to his advantage to stall off Gary Hall Jr and end the Americans' unbeaten run in the event, they have not lost at a world championship or an Olympics.

The Australians were inspired by their screaming crowd to win the final in three minutes 37.98 seconds — just 0.24 seconds outside the championship record held by the U.S.

It was Klim's fourth gold medal at the meet, an all-time best by a male swimmer at a world championship.

"That was our plan beforehand, for me to get Chris in front and to let him take us home from there, he went like a train," said Klim. "The crowd was great for us, the whole atmosphere was fantastic."

The U.S. were second in 3:38.56 with Hungary taking the bronze medal in 3:39.53.

"It was very painful, they got so much strength with the crowd behind them, it was great," said a disappointed Hall.

Australia had earlier beaten the U.S. in the men's



The gold medal-winning Australian men's 4x100 metre medley relay team (Top to Bottom) Chris Fydlar, Phil Rogers, Michael Klim and Matt Welsh celebrate their win at the 8th World Swimming Championships in Perth (Reuters photo)



Ukrainian-born Lenny Krayzelburg, representing the United States, bites his gold medal after winning the men's 200m backstroke final at the 8th World Swimming Championships (Reuters photo)

200m freestyle relay at the championship. O'Neill won the gold medal in a new championship record of 2:07.93 from Thomas (2:09.08) with Hyman holding on for the bronze medal in 2:09.98.

Thomas was overjoyed with her silver medal, saying: "Oh, my legs are hurting. I didn't come here expecting four medals at all, so I'm happy it's unbelievable... it's blown me away."

The U.S. won the other two finals on the programme to finish the championship

with 14 golds.

American Lenny Krayzelburg completed the backstroke double with a convincing victory in the 200-metre final.

The Ukrainian-born Krayzelburg hit the front inside the third lap and pulled away from the early leader Ralf Braun of Germany to win in 1:58.84.

Braun took silver in 1:59.23 with Canadian Mark Versfeld getting the bronze medal in 1:59.39.

"Coming here my aim was to win the 100 and 200 backstroke and now I've done it I feel pretty good," said Krayzelburg.

Atlanta Olympic gold medalist Amy Van Dyken of the U.S. overcame a slow start to win the women's 50 metre freestyle dash.

Van Dyken finished powerfully from 25m out to win in a time of 25.15 seconds from German Sandra Volker.

Volker took the silver medal in 25.32secs from China's Shan Ying, who captured the bronze medal in 25.36secs.

American Jenny Thompson, bidding for her fifth gold medal at the meet, finished in fourth place and out of a medal for the first time in six swims.

"I didn't know it was going to be my race right from the start but at the 25m mark I started wondering so I just put my head down and said to myself, it's mine, it's mine," Van Dyken said.

Teen stars dominate Australian Open centre court

MELBOURNE (AFP) — The new teen stars of tennis, led by sisters Venus and Serena Williams, are set to dominate the first day of the Australian Open on Monday.

Centre court has been reserved for the Williams girls and 16-year-old Australian Lleyton Hewitt who stunned the tennis world by winning the Australian Hardcourt Championship this month. The trio get equal billing with men's No. 1 Pete Sampras and home favourite Mark Philippoussis.

All the top players were out for final practice on Sunday for the \$6.5 million Grand Slam, now in its 10th year at Melbourne Park.

With Martina Hingis now Women's No. 1, the rise of the teen stars has shaken some tour veterans and the absence of Steffi Graf, Monica Seles and Jana Novotna means the hard-hitting youngsters are brimming with confidence.

"We are not nervous about this at all. People know us. This is going to be the year of the Williams," said 17-year-old Venus Williams.

Hewitt, the third youngest player to win a men's tour title and the youngest in the men's contest, will start centre court proceedings against Daniel Vacek of the Czech Republic.

Then Serena Williams, 16, starts her first Grand Slam against sixth seed Irina Spirlea of Romania. Big sister Venus beat Spirlea in last year's U.S. Open semi-final in an acrimonious

encounter. Venus, unseeded but third favourite with bookmakers, takes her turn in the show court against Alexia Dechaume Balleret of France.

If both Williams win then they will play each other in the second round, ensuring the family frenzy will continue.

And though the claws are not fully extended yet, it is clear that Venus Williams is looking for a fight with fellow 17-year-old Hingis in the battle to be No. 1.

She beat Hingis in Sydney last week and insists the Swiss star is vulnerable. "People have seen her play and a lot of the girls are stronger than her and they can manipulate that. A lot of the girls are faster than her."

Venus admits, however, that Hingis is "smarter." If the Williams family challenge fizzles out, there is still Russian 16-year-old Anna Kournikova, and 15-year-old Croat Mirjana Lukic at the head of a pack waiting for their chance.

Lindsay Davenport, the second seed who starts against Amelie Cocheteux of France on court two, is only 21 but admitted after losing to Serena Williams in Sydney that she felt middle-aged against the "incredible generation" on the tour.

Amanda Coetzer, ranked fourth in the world, lost to Lucic in her first tournament last year. Lucic went on to win her debut event while Coetzer now says she can see the writing on

the wall. "There's always been the stronger, taller girls, but I've never seen so many athletic, strong tall girls," said the 26-year-old South African.

"I definitely feel the need to have a little more power to stand my ground. I think I'm still quite competitive at the top, but its going to be a challenge for me over the next few years."

Sampras, who plays World No. 51, Sjeng Schalken of the Netherlands, said he was happy to let the teenagers monopolise attention.

At 26, the American is an oldie but reckons he could top the rankings for at least another two years. Despite a recent injury and two defeats in the Kooyong Classic last week, he says he is "fresh" and seems to be hitting the ball with his usual ferocity.

U.S. Open champion Pat Rafter, who says it is just a question of time before he takes over as number one, does not start until Tuesday with number three seed Michael Chang.

But Australian fans will get a hero to cheer on when Philippoussis, the No. 15 seed, takes on Alex Calatrava of Spain.

Of the other favourites in action on Monday, French Open champion Iva Majoli of Croatia, the women's fourth seed, plays Naoko Sawamatsu.

Men's fourth seed Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden plays Allen Belobrajdic of Australia.

The main men for the Australian Open

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Profiles of top male challengers for the Australian Open which starts Monday:

• **PETE SAMPRAS: No. 1 seed — United States**

Now hailed as the greatest player of the past quarter of a century, and arguably all time, Pistol Pete is favourite to win any tournament he enters. A powerful server and an accomplished returner of the big servers on the tour, even close rivals say they cannot fault the Sampras game.

1997 was another distinguished year for the American. He won the Australian Open and his fourth Wimbledon in five years and finished top of the men's rankings for the fifth year running — equalling Jimmy Connors record.

With 10 Grand Slam titles to his name, 1998 could see him overtake Roy Emerson's all-time record of 12 majors. At the age of 27 and with a new generation rising, time is now Sampras' biggest enemy. How long can he stay at the top? Had a tough Christmas undergoing intensive treatment for a torn calf muscle, which upset his routine.

• **FAT RAFTER: No. 2 seed — Australia**

Rose spectacularly from 62nd to second in the rankings in 1997 and won the U.S. Open. He also reached six other finals.

If anyone can beat Sampras, Pat Rafter can. The Australian will be on home ground at Melbourne Park and the U.S. Open triumph was a major confidence booster having won only one previous title on the men's tour.

The 1.85m serve-and-volley specialist, who started playing at the age of five, has proved he can master all surfaces. But expectations are high and the pressure could get to Rafter, who was knocked out in the first round last year and has never got past the fourth round in Melbourne.

• **MICHAEL CHANG: No. 3 seed — United States**

The great under-achiever of men's tennis even though Chang has been in the world top 10 for six years and is still only 25.

Won five ATP tour titles in 1997 and was world number two for most of the year before being overtaken by Rafter at the end. But he has still not won a major since becoming the youngest Grand Slam champion at the French Open at the age of 17 years and three months.

Though only 1.75m and slightly built, he is still a brilliant all round player with a big serve.

A devout Christian, the Chinese-American will go into the Open as the favourite of Asian fans who he has increasingly cultivated over the years.

• **JONAS BJORKMAN: No. 4 seed — Sweden**

Bjorkman was another player to shoot up the rankings in 1997. He started in 69th place and finished number four.

The 25-year-old won three titles in five ATP tour finals and crowned his great year by leading Sweden to victory over the United States in the Davis Cup final.

The Swede has one of the best returns in tennis. His breakthrough has helped him shake off a reputation of being mainly a successful doubles player.

Has beaten Sampras, which not many players can claim, but many rivals are waiting to see if he has the temperament to keep up his dramatic improvement.

• **GREG RUSEDZKI: No. 5 seed — Britain**

The 24-year-old Canadian-born British No. 1 has finally been accepted by success-starved British tennis fans after dethroning Tim Henman.

The 1.93m left-hander has the fiercest serve in tennis but says he will have to become more aggressive to stand a chance of topping Sampras as world number one.

Won two ATP tour titles in six finals, but the highlight of 1997 was reaching the U.S. Open final, where he was beaten by Rafter, and becoming the first Briton to qualify for the ATP Tour World Championship.

Has suffered at the Australian Open however, going out in the first round round for three of the past four years.

The women to watch at the Australian Open

• **MARTINA HINGIS: No. 1 seed — Switzerland**

With Steffi Graf still absent after missing most of last season with a knee injury, Martina Hingis is the new queen of women's tennis. But she faces plenty of competition.

Only 17 years old, the right-hander with an ultra-cool temperament won three Grand Slam titles last year, starting in Australia where she was the youngest major title winner of the open era at the age of 16 years, three months and 26 days. Only the French Open eluded her. She was still recuperating after falling off a horse but still reached the final.

Starts the new year with a new brown rinse hair colour and shaded contact lenses to deflect the sun. But the Australian Open and 1998 will be a major test of whether Hingis can hold off World No. 2 Lindsay Davenport and a new generation of wouldbe tennis queens — led by America's Venus Williams, Russian teenager Anna Kournikova and Croats Mirjana Lucic and Iva Majoli, who beat her in the French Open.

• **LINDSAY DAVENPORT: No. 2 seed — U.S.**

Won six titles in 1997 but was overshadowed by the rise of Hingis, which the solid right hander says suits her fine. Is one of only seven players to have beaten both Hingis and Steffi Graf.

Some doubt she has the killer instinct to become No. 1. She reached a Grand Slam semi-final for the first time at the U.S. Open last year but has struggled playing outside her native United States. Five of her titles last year were in America as was her 1996 Olympic title.

• **AMANDA COETZER: No. 3 seed — South Africa**

At 27, the oldest of the top five seeds for the Australia Open but was voted the most improved player of last year by Tennis magazine.

She beat Steffi Graf at the Australian and French Opens last year and reached the semi-finals at both, but managed two tour titles in Budapest and Luxembourg.

Has also beaten Hingis and because of her giant-killing feats, the Australian press calls the 5ft 2in Coetzer "the

Little Assassin." But now the South African is the prey instead of the hunter and she will need a lot of determination to win here — though the draw is in her favour.

• **IVA MAJOLI: No. 4 seed — Croatia**

The 20-year-old heads a new generation of brilliant Croat women players. 1997 saw her big breakthrough with a victory in the French Open final over Martina Hingis. She also won two other tour titles and ended the year in sixth place in the women's rankings.

Coached by her brother Drago and businessman father Stanko, Majoli is known for her boundless energy on court. But needs to be in the right mood to shine. She reached the quarter final in Australia in 1996 but went out in the first round last year.

• **MARY PIERCE: No. 5 seed — France**

Australia is the 23-year-old Pierce's favourite place to visit and play. She won the Australian Open in 1995 and reached the final unseeded last year.

Pierce calmed considerably after splitting with her father as coach but she also broke her shoulder in 1996. Pierce was sidelined for two months and there were fears that could be the end.

But she made a dramatic comeback, also winning the 1997 Italian Open and reaching the final of the WTA championships. Her ranking rose from 25th at the start to seventh at the end of the season.

Like Davenport and Coetzer, Pierce has beaten Graf and Hingis and must be considered a major threat in Melbourne.

• **VENUS WILLIAMS: Unseeded — United States**

Just 17, Venus Williams is a big favourite with the bookies even though she was not seeded for the Australian Open. At 1.86m she is a powerful player and likes to tell everyone how good she is.

Reached the final of the U.S. Open last year and beat Hingis in Sydney this week. The leader of the teen pack chasing the World No. 1 and a name to watch.

Deluxe Furnished First Floor Apartment For Rent

Consists of 2 bedrooms, fully equipped kitchen, independent central heating, private telephone. Location: Shmeisani, near Redson SAS Hotel (former Philadelphia Hotel). Quiet area. Annual rent. If interested call Tel. 664839 after 9 a.m.

SUPER DELUXE APARTMENT FOR RENT

Consists of 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, 2 verandas, salon, dining, sitting, modern kitchen, central heating. Area 245 sq.m. Location: Al Rabieeh District. Please call Tel.: 5527752

FOR RENT

Furnished And Unfurnished Apartments (Studio - one bedroom and two bedrooms) C.H. and telephones Location: Jabal Amman, bet. 3rd & 4th Circles. (7 Mustafa Khalifah Street). Tel.: 642351 - 079/50504

For Rent Furnished Or Unfurnished

1. Ground floor flat (300sq.m.) with 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, nice garden and two telephone lines.
2. Villa with 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms -Jabal Amman - 4th Circle. Byblos 829882/3

CINEMA	TEL: 634144	CINEMA	TEL: 634144	CINEMA	TEL: 690258	CINEMA	TEL: 677420	CINEMA	TEL: 079 33430	CINEMA	TEL: 079 33430	Risham Yanes Theatre	TEL: 625155
PHILADELPHIA "1"		PHILADELPHIA "2"		PLAZA		CONCORD		GALLERIA 2		GALLERIA 1		NOW ON DAILY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas For reservations call: 640155, 625155	
George Clooney & Nicole Kidman ... in THE PEACEMAKER Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Steven Spielberg's ... TWISTER Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		SCREAM Shows: 12:00, 6:30 AL MASEER (Arabic) Nour Al Sharif Shows: 8:30, 10:45 HERCULES Shows: 2:00 p.m.		CONCORD "1" Nader Al-Jundi/ Ahmad Badier Nahla Salameh...in RIDING HIGH Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:15, 8:15, 10:30 CONCORD "2" MR. BEAN Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		ABDOUN BEVERLY HILLS NINJA Shows: 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		ABDOUN SALMA HAYEK ... in FOOLS RUSH IN Shows: 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30			

Iraqi defence ministry invites people to military training in 'new response' to U.S. threats

BAGHDAD (AP) — The Iraqi defence ministry on Sunday urged Iraqis to volunteer for weapons training, a first move toward implementing President Saddam Hussein's call for every man and woman to be ready to bear arms if Iraq is attacked.

Mr. Hussein urged mobilising the Iraqi people on Saturday night in comments to leaders of the ruling Baath Party, saying that "the Americans are continuing to harm our people, which requires a new method of response."

His statement followed his threat to refuse to cooperate with U.N. weapons inspectors if they have not completed their work — leading to the lifting of U.N. sanctions on Iraq — within four months.

Iraqi leaders have expressed fear of an attack by the United States during the two-and-a-half-month dispute with the U.N. Security Council over weapons inspections.

The crisis heated up last week with Iraq's blocking one team of inspectors, saying it had too many Americans and Britons. Iraq accused the United States of trying to prolong U.N. sanctions on Iraq.

Mr. Hussein, in his comments to Baath Party leaders shown on state television, told the party to organise weapons training nationwide, saying the programme should be voluntary.

"The more people that enrol under the new programme, the better," he said.

On Sunday, the defence ministry urged "those who believe in Iraq and its unity to go to the nearest branch of the Baath Party to join the popular training fields, which will take place all over the country."

It said that retired officers would "have the honour of defending the country by training the rest of the people."

The ministry's statement did not say for which weapons the training would be given, but it is expected to be AK-47 assault rifles, hand grenades and rocket grenade launchers.

It was unclear how the new volunteers would differ from another volunteer military force, the "Tedayeen Saddam," or Mr. Hussein's commandos. The size of the force is not known.

Despite the Iraqi leader's threat to stop cooperating with weapons inspectors, American

Bahrain receives first visit by Iraqi official since Gulf crisis

MANAMA (AFP) — Bahrain received its first visit by an Iraqi official since Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait Saturday as the standoff between Iraq and the United Nations over weapons inspections continued.

Iraqi foreign ministry undersecretary, Saad Abdul Majid Al Feisal, discussed the standoff with his Bahraini counterpart Ghazi Mohammad Al Ghosabi, the Bahrain-based GNA news agency reported.

The Iraqi official "explained his country's position on the implementation of the U.N. resolutions and the sufferings of the Iraqi people," GNA reported.

Baghdad accuses Britain and the United States of seeking to subvert the work of U.N. weapons inspectors to maintain U.N. sanctions indefinitely despite their impact on the Iraqi people.

The Bahraini official replied that Iraq should "implement U.N. resolutions and cooperate" with U.N. weapons inspectors, GNA reported.

Bahrain is the rear-base for the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) charged with dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles and is currently one of the rotating members of the U.N. Security Council.

The U.N.'s chief weapons inspector Richard Butler arrived here Saturday to prepare for a mission to Baghdad Monday to seek a solution to the crisis over weapons inspections.

Iraq has diplomatic representation in Manama although the Bahraini embassy in Baghdad is closed. Bahrain took part in the 1991 Gulf war coalition against Iraq.

Two members of Bahrain's appointed Consultative Council visited Baghdad Thursday to deliver a consignment of food and medicine as a gift from the Bahraini people.

Bahrain described a similar mission the two men undertook last year as a private initiative.

Officials reacted not with hints of attack but with calm statements about the necessity of Iraq living up to U.N. resolutions.

In Washington, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Mr. Hussein is "tightening the noose around himself" by not letting the inspection team go forward, almost as if saying "OK, you caught me."

"They must have been close to something on whether biological or chemical weapons were used on prisoners," Ms. Albright told the Associated Press.

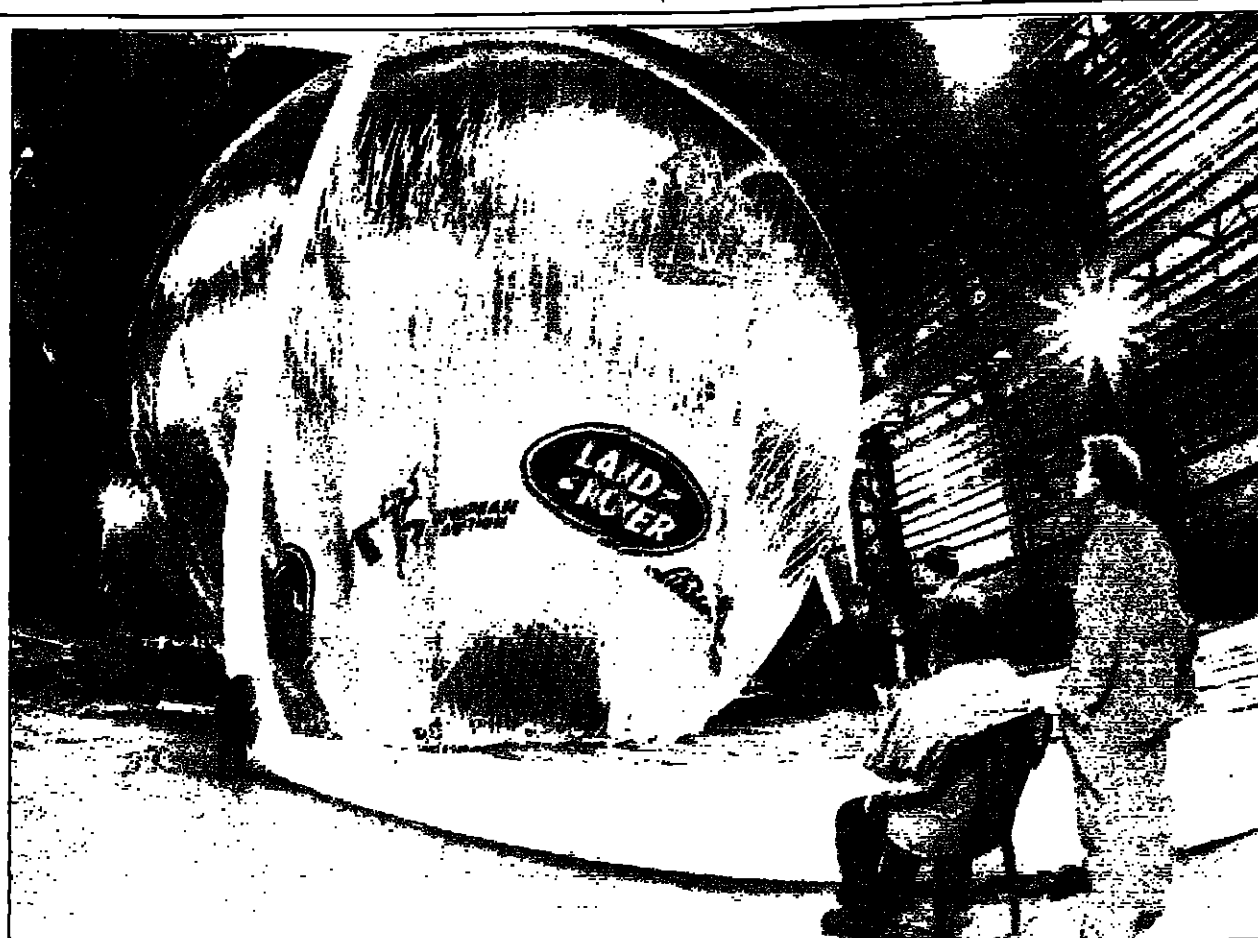
State Department Spokesman James Rubin added that "the only way that sanctions can be lifted is if Saddam Hussein ensures that his government cooperates with the U.N. under the terms the U.N. has set out."

The arms inspectors have the job of certifying that Iraq has fulfilled Security Council resolutions demanding that it eliminate its weapons of mass destruction before U.N. sanctions — including a ban on Iraq's export of oil — will be lifted.

Iraq insists it has met all its obligations under the resolutions, adopted after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. But the weapons inspectors have accused Mr. Hussein's government of hiding weapons and the means to manufacture chemical and biological agents. The dispute over the weapons inspections centres on so-called sensitive sites such as Mr. Hussein's presidential palaces, which Iraq insists are symbols of Iraqi sovereignty that should not be entered by the inspectors.

Last October and November, Iraq refused to allow inspections by Americans, saying they were spies helping plan U.S. attacks. The United Nations pulled all inspectors out of Iraq in response, but they returned in three weeks following Russian mediation.

Last week, the confrontation was renewed when Iraq barred an American-led U.N. team from working by denying it necessary Iraqi escorts. The team led by American Scott Ritter left Friday in what U.N. officials said was a scheduled departure, not a surrender to Iraqi pressure.



BRANSON'S TOY FIT FOR PLAY: Under pressure, engineers test the new Virgin Global Challenger balloon in the old Cammel Laird shipbuilding shed at Birkenhead Saturday. The new envelope passed with flying colours and is now headed for Richard Branson's Marrakesh launch site in Morocco. Branson's earlier attempt in the past year ended in failure when the balloon escaped during inflation (AFP photo)

Turkey will crack down on any party on footsteps of Welfare

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish authorities will close down any party seeking to continue the mission of the pro-Islamist Welfare Party, banned last week by the Constitutional Court, Turkey's top prosecutor has warned.

"If we understand that any party is acting as the continuation of a dissolved party, we will also seek its closure by the Constitutional Court," Vural Savas said in remarks published Sunday in the liberal Istanbul daily Sabah.

Mr. Savas' statement came after a senior Welfare official announced that the dissolved party would regroup under a new name, but without its banned leader, Necmettin Erbakan.

"We will continue our mission under a new name and a new leader," Lutfi Esengun, a close aide to ex-Premier Necmettin Erbakan, said Saturday.

But the prosecutor warned: "If Welfare deputies enter that new party in masses, if the pro-Welfare press supports that party and if the banned leader [Erbakan] points to that party, we will demand that the high

court dissolve that party as well."

The constitutional court on Friday banned the Welfare Party, the largest in parliament, for activities it said were aimed at undermining Turkey's secular regime. Mr. Erbakan and two of his top aides were also barred from politics for five years.

Under Turkey's constitution, a political party which is effectively the same party acting under a different name also risks being closed down. The criteria for such action, however, are vague.

In a related development, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel defended the ban on Welfare, saying "its closure is not the end of the world."

"It is impossible to be happy. I wish things had not reached this stage. However, nobody has the right or privilege to violate the laws of the Republic of Turkey," Mr. Demirel told the private television channel NTV in a late Saturday night interview.

"There are lessons to be drawn from this closure. Political parties would from now on take into account the

fact that the Constitutional Court and the people guard the regime," Mr. Demirel said.

After the ban on Welfare, 147 of its deputies will remain in parliament as independents.

Some aides to Mr. Erbakan have already created a new political group, the Virtue Party, where most of the Welfare deputies in parliament could gather.

"It could be that party or another party, but there will definitely be a new organisation," said Mr. Esengun, a former cabinet minister for human rights.

The court decisions on Welfare and Mr. Erbakan will formally take effect when they are published in the Official Gazette, probably this week.

Mr. Erbakan said late Saturday that the European human rights court would convict Turkey for dissolving Welfare on what he called non-judicial grounds.

The United States and Britain have criticised Welfare's dissolution, saying the move would hurt democratic pluralism in Turkey.

Last Friday's ban on Welfare was generally seen as a victory

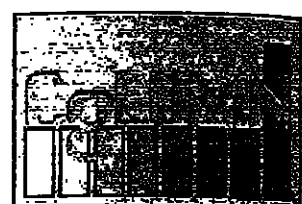
for Turkey's powerful pro-secular army generals who have been campaigning against the Islamist movement since last February.

"It might seem paradoxical, but it is Welfare who is now seeking a place for Turkey in the Western system by intending to defend itself in the European human rights court," political analyst Cengiz Candar said in his column in Sabah.

"Meanwhile, it is the so-called pro-Western forces — that had accused Welfare of being anti-Western — who are actually disrupting Turkey's links with the West" through the ban, Mr. Candar said.

The constitutional court began a series of hearings last May into the activities of Welfare, which was accused by Mr. Savas and other state prosecutors of being the centre of anti-secular activities.

The charges were concentrated on remarks by Mr. Erbakan and his aides calling for "jihad," or Islamic holy war in Turkey, and Welfare's efforts to introduce Islamic practices into daily life.



Janet Jackson thanks firemen by providing masseurs

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Singer Janet Jackson thanked the L.A. County firefighters for saving her Malibu estate from devastating fires by sending her own special present: two women to give them deep, relaxing massages. Now, the idea has become an annual event from Janet to the fire station nearest her home. "It's a goodwill gesture, that's all," said Jackson. One fire-fighter spokesman said, "It couldn't have made them any happier, and with all the accolades and congratulations we got from everyone, that was one of the best!"

First Tamagotchi 'cemetery' opened

BUDAPEST (AFP) — A first "cemetery" for Tamagotchi, the Japanese electronic pets, opened at Dunaszekcső in southern Hungary, the national television reported. A good dozen "dead" Tamagotchis were buried in a wall installed specially for the purpose by a private businessman. The cheapest "funeral" for a Tamagotchi costs 500 forints (\$2.5) but some people were prepared to pay several thousand forints, the report said.

Winslet credits co-star DiCaprio for success in 'Titanic'

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Most of the odds-makers in Las Vegas say they expect Kate Winslet to get another Oscar nomination for her role in "Titanic," but she modestly credits her co-star Leonardo DiCaprio for her success. "It's his character that makes the movie," Winslet says. "Jack is the first person, the first man certainly who has shown interest in [my character's] desires and her dreams. They share so many of the same passions of life, which he's already attained and to which she's aspiring."

Postcard takes 22 years to be delivered

TOURLAVALLE (AFP) — When Daniel Lepoint left his home 22 years ago to do his military service, he sent his parents a postcard from Paris. On Wednesday the card, in near-perfect condition, finally arrived at their home in Tourlaville in northern France. "I couldn't understand it when I saw this postcard pushed under the door," his mother Christiane, now 67, told AFP. "The postman always comes later and leaves the mail in the post-box. And I didn't know what my son could be doing down there," she added. It was only when she telephoned Daniel, now 40, that she realised the card was dated Dec. 4, 1975.

Sheridan film to launch Berlinale

BERLIN (AFP) — The Jim Sheridan-directed film "The Boxer," starring Daniel Day-Lewis, will launch this year's Berlin film festival next month, festival officials said. It will be a welcome return for Sheridan to the festival where his "In the Name of the Father" won the Golden Bear in 1994. The 48th edition of the Berlinale opens on Feb. 11. In "The Boxer," Day-Lewis plays an Irish Republican Army member who turns to boxing after finishing prison, but is soon caught up in the divisions of a movement trying to break British rule over Northern Ireland.

UAE seeks end to U.S. freeze on funds of Libyan-linked bank

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has held fresh talks with the United States in a bid to unblock nearly \$5 million in frozen funds of an Emirati-based bank partly owned by Libya, newspapers reported Sunday.

Officials from the UAE finance ministry and the central bank have been trying to persuade Washington to release the money, which it froze nearly seven years ago as part of sanctions against Libya.

UAE Communication Minister Ahmed Al Tayar, chairman of the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Bank for Investment and Foreign Trade

(ARBIT) which is 42 per cent owned by Libya, would not say when the latest talks took place. "Those funds are still frozen in the United States although they belong to a third party," he said.

"We have had contacts with U.S. officials recently to prove those funds are not Libyan and that ARBIT is a UAE not a Libyan institution. We hope we will receive a positive response to release those funds."

The UAE, which has held several rounds of negotiations with Washington on the matter, said recently it would float shares to local investors in a bid to water down the Libyan stake. Mr. Tayar did not say whether

the bank would push ahead with plans to increase its capital through public subscription to \$207 million from \$155.3 million.

He was speaking Saturday after ARBIT, set up in 1976, released its balance sheet showing a net profit of \$45.2 million in 1997 compared with \$43.8 million in 1996.

The general assembly approved a cash dividend of \$15.5 million to shareholders, which include the Algerian government. The rest was transferred to the general reserves.

The bank's assets grew to around \$1.46 billion from \$1.37 billion, making it one of the biggest banks in the emirates.

Israel works on bringing in 2,500 more Ethiopian immigrants

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli plans to bring in 2,500 Ethiopians in the next seven months on condition that they convert back to Judaism, officials said Sunday.

The Ethiopian Falash Mora, who are waiting in a transit camp in Addis Ababa, are former Ethiopian Jews who were converted to Christianity in the 19th century by missionaries.

About 400 Falash Mora arrive at Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv every month, although some have been waiting seven months in Addis Ababa.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the treasury over the weekend to transfer \$11.5 million for their reception, including temporary housing.

But the official said this figure was expected to triple according to immigrant absorption ministry estimates.

The government decided last summer to facilitate their immigration on the basis of family reunification following a debate over their Jewishness. About 60,000 Ethiopian Jews now live in Israel.

Ethiopian Jews face an enormous cultural gap here and have found integration into society difficult, suffering from higher levels of unemployment and discrimination.

Israel applauds U.S. museum decision to snub Arafat

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli cabinet secretary, Danny Naveh, welcomed Sunday a decision by the Washington Holocaust museum not to receive a VIP Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in a proposed visit this week.

But many Israeli officials lambasted the decision, saying a visit would have helped the reconciliation process between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

Mr. Naveh said blatant anti-Semitism in Mr. Arafat's Palestinian National Authority could not be overlooked. "Is it imaginable that Chairman Arafat would make an official visit in a Holocaust museum when only last week his justice minister compared the Israeli prime minister to Hitler," Mr. Naveh told reporters.

"Every day there are anti-Semitic comments by his officials. Any request to visit the museum is cynical and ignores the fact that Arafat must stop the anti-Semitic trend if the Holocaust is really close to his heart."

The museum's chairman of the board, Miles Lerman, rejected U.S. government requests that Mr. Arafat be welcomed as a VIP during his visit to Washington for talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton this week.

Yasser Arafat can come to the Holocaust museum as a private person, but we cannot host him as though he were the head of a state, as such a visit would have significance," Mr. Lerman, a Holocaust survivor, told Yediot Achronot newspaper.

Museum directors accused Mr. Arafat of trying to use the visit, proposed by officials in the U.S. State Department, for "political goals" to try to win American support in the peace process with Israel stalled for 10 months.

Mr. Clinton is due to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday and Mr. Arafat on Thursday as part of intense U.S. efforts to revive peace talks.

The Israeli Simon Wiesenthal Centre said Mr. Arafat's proposed visit "does not reflect a genuine desire on his part... but is most likely a ploy to gain support in Western public opinion."

But the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum and the Kibbutz movement criticised the Washington museum's decision.

"There's no reason why we wouldn't receive Arafat here," Yad Vashem official Yehuda Bower told Israel Radio.

Kibbutz movement head Absalom Veilin labelled the Washington museum's directors "Jewish extremists" and said he had invited Mr. Arafat to visit two of the movement's Holocaust memorial centres.

"This visit would be part of the reconciliation process between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples," Mr. Veilin told AFP. "Every top German official is invited to the museum and there is no reason why Arafat, with all his record, shouldn't also be invited."

Syria would welcome unconditional Israeli retreat from Lebanon — Sharaa

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria said Sunday it would applaud an unconditional Israeli retreat from south Lebanon but insisted that any Israeli peace accord with Lebanon must be accompanied by a settlement with Syria.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa said in remarks published Sunday that

Israel should "leave Lebanon without conditions, conforming with U.N. Security Council Resolution 425."

"We Syrians would be very happy with this. The Lebanese people too," he told the Syrian parliament.

Syria is the dominant influence in neighbouring Lebanon,

where about 35,000 Syrian troops are stationed in two-thirds of the country.

"Hizbollah would be the happiest of all because its resistance would have pushed the Israelis out of south Lebanon without negotiations or security arrangements" for the Jewish state, Mr. Sharaa said.

Thousands of Christians mark Jesus' baptism

JORDAN RIVER (AFP) — Thousands of Christian Orthodox pilgrims immersed themselves in the Jordan River Sunday in a ritual celebration of the baptism of Jesus.

The "Epiphany" ceremony including Palestinians and foreigners and led by the Jerusalem Greek-Orthodox Patriarch Diodoros I was held near the West Bank town of Jericho in an area controlled by the Israeli army and opened only three times a year.

The participants included mostly Palestinians from the West Bank town of Bethlehem, Arab Israelis from Nazareth and the coastal city of Acre and Russian and Romanian workers in Israel. Israeli and Jordanian soldiers looked on as the



A Russian Orthodox pilgrim smiles broadly as she gets out of the Jordan River at Qasr Al Yahud after celebrating the baptism ceremony of Epiphany Sunday alongside Russian Orthodox nuns (AP photo)

Christians dipped in the river in the middle of winter to the cheers of fellow pilgrims. According to Christian tra-

dition, Jesus was baptised by his cousin John at the ford of Bethabara on the Jordan River.